Intuition in Kant's Theoretical Epistemology: Content, Skepticism, and Idealism

Katherine Gasdaglis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

2014

© 2014
Katherine Gasdaglis
All rights reserved

Abstract

Intuition in Kant's Theoretical Epistemology: Content, Skepticism, and Idealism

Katherine Gasdaglis

Kant famously wrote, "Thoughts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind." The traditional reception of Kant understands this claim as a synopsis of his views about semantic content. On the one hand, according to this reading, our concepts and the thoughts they compose would be meaningless without perception, or "intuition," to verify them and thereby provide them with content; on the other, our perceptions would have no structure and would be of no cognitive use without concepts to direct them. Against the traditional reading, this dissertation argues that Kant's many claims about the necessary relations that run between intuitions and concepts are most fundamentally of epistemological rather than semantic significance. Kant's ultimate aim was to articulate the necessary conditions that must obtain for sensibility and understanding, intuitions and concepts, to cooperate in the pursuit of theoretical knowledge of the world. This interpretation is grounded on an analysis of three puzzles that arise around the function of intuition in his theoretical epistemology.

The first puzzle arises for Kant's view of the nature of the content of perception. Is perception exhaustively conceptual in structure, or is it at all an independent representational faculty? According to Orthodox Conceptualism, Kant's central argument in the Transcendental Analytic entails that perception is conceptual. It is widely agreed that, in the Analytic, Kant aims to show that certain fundamental metaphysical concepts, called "categories," including the relation of cause and effect, genuinely apply to objects. Orthodox Conceptualism argues that the categories can only be shown to apply to objects if they necessarily structure our perception of

objects. Against this orthodox reading, I argue that, in fact, the success of the Analytic presupposes a strong version of Non-Conceptualism. Orthodox Conceptualism saddles Kant with a kind of error theory of categorial judgments, by showing that the categories apply only to our mind's subjective organization of perceptual experience and not to the *objects* of that experience. Kant is and should be a non-conceptualist about perceptual content.

The second puzzle arises when we consider Kant's postulate of actuality, which claims that perception provides necessary and sufficient justification for knowledge of the reality of things. Cartesian external world skepticism challenges this principle by, in part, appeal to an inferential model of perception. On that model we are only ever *immediately* aware of our own inner representations and then must infer the existence of things external to those inner states. If Descartes is right, then our knowledge of the external world will always be less certain than the knowledge we have of our own minds. How exactly does Kant mean to respond to this challenge and to what extent, if any, is it successful? Traditional interpretations of Kant's "Refutation" of Cartesian skepticism argue that even our knowledge of the temporal order of our own mental states, knowledge of the kind "I saw x, then saw y," depends on our possession of certain causal information about the things that caused those thoughts and which those thoughts are about, namely x and y. While I agree that Kant aims to argue that some form of self-knowledge, which Descartes thinks can be foundational for philosophy, is *mediated by* our knowledge of the external world, the traditional Causal Reading falls short in a variety of ways. Kant aimed to show that the capacity to have knowledge of our existence as a *time-determinable self*, in an objective empirical time, depends on our capacity to make true determinations about objects in space. Objects in space, according to Kant, must be used to fix the frames of reference in which empirical time-determinations can be made. So, if it is true that we can have objective

knowledge of our own existence in time, then the objects in space that we use to ground those judgments must exist. If the Cartesian wishes to challenge the capacity to objectively determine even our own existence, then he leaves himself no philosophical ground to stand on, nor any way to move forward from the bare bones of his *cogito*. He also thereby transforms himself into an extreme skeptic. Although Kant cannot answer this extreme form of skepticism on its own terms, I argue that he has systematic resources for dismissing it as a real threat to theoretical philosophy. Extreme skepticism is nothing more than a subject's mere longing for a kind of perspective on her own cognitive situation that is in principle impossible for her to have, given the very nature of cognition. Such a perspective is what Kant would call "noumenal" and is therefore not a genuine question for theoretical reason.

The third puzzle arises when we consider Kant's Transcendental Idealism in light of his claims that "noumena" are "merely logically possible." Noumena, by definition, are paradigmatic "empty" concepts, in Kant's sense, insofar as we can never experience them, and therefore have "no insight" into their real possibility. Nevertheless a core thesis of Kant's Transcendental Idealism is that the concept of noumena somehow epistemologically "limits" our empirical knowledge to the realm of "appearances," rather than "things in themselves." Now the puzzle arises: How can a mere empty concept, the object of which we cannot even say is *really possible*, set any kind of restriction on the scope of our empirical knowledge? I argue that the source of the puzzle lies in "metaphysical" interpretations of the distinction between phenomena and noumena, readings which distinguish either between two worlds with two kinds of objects, or between two kinds of property of one type of object. Dissolving the puzzle, I argue, requires adopting a strongly *methodological* reading of the distinction, according to which the phenomenal refers to that domain of metaphysical possibility into which we can legitimately

inquire, and the noumenal to that space of mere logical possibilities that falls beyond. By distinguishing between the domains of *legitimate* metaphysically inquiry and metaphysical possibility *per se*, Kant can consistently demand a theoretical agnosticism about the real possibility of noumena while at the same time showing that the concept of noumena restricts the domain of empirical knowledge.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Patricia Kitcher for all her expert advice in the writing of this dissertation. As an adviser, she has been the model of patience and support, reading multiple drafts of every chapter and giving me invaluable direction and feedback. As a scholar and philosopher, her work on Kant sets the example for making the history of philosophy contemporary and important. *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* was a turning point in Kant scholarship and has been a constant source of inspiration in my own philosophical development. I can't thank her enough.

I would also like to thank Wolfgang Mann. He joined the committee at a later stage, but his feedback and suggestions have been central to the project's current framing. The careful and critical comments he has offered during the development of each of these chapters is a humbling reminder that it is possible to be an expert on many, many things.

I would like to thank Fred Neuhouser for leading by example. His incisive clarity on Hegel and Fichte's thought has given me important perspective on the German reception of Kant. I would also like to thank Fred for opening a space for his students to present their work, many of whom were working on questions in German Idealism and the history of philosophy. I received a great deal of helpful feedback from his dissertation colloquia.

Many thanks to Christopher Peacocke for his decisive contributions to the debate about non-conceptual content. Chris's work on the mind led me to pursue many of the themes that this dissertation engages. I'm also grateful for his readership, feedback, and helpful suggestions.

I would also like to thank Andrew Chignell, whose work on Kant has framed my thinking about several questions raised in this dissertation, especially in interpreting Kant's notion of "real

possibility." I would also like to thank Andrew for agreeing to join the committee as an external reader and for his insightful questions and supportive comments.

I'd like to thank Christia Mercer for both her philosophical and professional support. I was a teaching assistant for Christia on a number of occasions while writing the dissertation and her approach to the history of philosophy has taught me that awareness of the political significance of epistemic issues makes more than a merely political difference.

I would also like to thank Lydia Goehr for her feedback and professional guidance. I got to know Lydia through her role as job placement officer at Columbia, but found her thoughtful comments and suggestions on my work extremely helpful.

Many, many thanks to my cohort of friends and colleagues from Columbia. Brian Kim read earlier drafts of every chapter of the dissertation and always had time to talk about skepticism. Michael Brent courageously toed the conceptualist line when the rest of us wouldn't have dared. Anubav Vasudevan read earlier versions of each chapter, raised important critical suggestions for all of them, and then helped me think about pragmatism. Marco Nathan never let me forget that the history of philosophy was a kind of history. Andreja Novakovic never let me forget that the history of philosophy was, first and foremost, philosophy. She also read drafts of the whole dissertation, offered invaluable feedback, and joined me in thinking through what I now agree the history of philosophy can be, namely a cooperative and dialogical thinking-with. Thanks very much to Vicki Weafer for talking with me about so many puzzling aspects of Kant's views about science and for helping me come to face the fact that, sometimes, Kant is just puzzling. You folks were my philosophical home at Columbia.

I would like to thank my family and closest friends for their love and support. My mother, Linda Gasdaglis, my father, Nick Gasdaglis, my brother, James Gasdaglis, my

grandparents, Kay and Larry Carroll, and my friends, Brandi Taylor and Reema Hijazi are the permanents in my life to which I can appeal to verify that I've been here all along (Chapter 2 should shed some light on this metaphor). Your unfailing confidence in me was a reminder that I could trust my cognitive capacities even when the world failed to cooperate. And your unconditional love continues to remind me that the fact that the world doesn't always cooperate doesn't mean it's the end of the world. Thank you for being my anchors.

Last but certainly not least, I would like to thank Alex Madva. Alex is not a Kantian, not even a little. He thinks that the most fundamental explanations of the mind, the world, and the relations between the two constitutively appeal to our embodied, skillful, and intelligent comportment to things considered as practical opportunities. Nevertheless, he has read every single word and talked with me through every single idea that has gone in and out of this dissertation about Kant. His objections, editing suggestions, and constructive criticism have not only improved the content and structure of the dissertation but also influenced my approach to the issues Kant himself was interested in. He has been a constant source of philosophical and professional support, even, at one point, volunteering to read aloud an earlier version of one of these chapters at the APA Eastern, when – to my professional horror – I was stricken with laryngitis. Alex, thank you for being my voice when I had none. And thanks for helping me find my voice when, from time to time, I felt as though I'd lost it.

For J and A, two necessary conditions

Introduction

> For every concept there is requisite, first, the logical form of a concept (of thinking) in general, and then, second, the possibility of giving it an object to which it is to be related. Without this latter it has no sense (*Sinn*), and is entirely empty of content (*Inhalt*), even though it may still contain the logical function for making a concept out of whatever sort of *data* there are. Now the object cannot be given to a concept otherwise than in intuition… (A238-9/B298)[1]

Passages like this one have led some readers to think that one of Kant's central aims in the *Critique of Pure Reason* is to give a verificationist, or justificationist, theory of meaning.[2] Kant claims repeatedly that concepts are "empty of content" (*Inhalt*) or without "sense" or "meaning" (*Sinn, Bedeutung*) if objects cannot be given to them through "intuition," Kant's term for a mental state issued by the perceptual faculty. Verificationist theories hold that only those propositions that can be verified by experience are genuinely meaningful.[3] Justificationist theories hold that the semantic content of a concept consists in the conditions for justifying its application. On these types of reading, the above passage would be reconstructed roughly as follows:

---

[1] All references to the *Critique of Pure Reason* are to the Guyer and Wood translation, unless otherwise indicated. I include the standard A/B pagination in-text in reference to the 1781 and 1787 editions. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Eds. Guyer, and Wood, Cambridge University Press, 1998. References to Kant's other works include the full reference to the published translation along with the volume and page numbers from the Akadamie Ausgabe (indicated by the abbreviation *Ak*) of Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, (Berlin, Königlich-Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin) in the first appearance of the work, then only the title, volume and page number from the Academy Edition.

[2] This reading became popular after Strawson. Strawson writes, "If we wish to use a concept in a certain way, but cannot specify the experience-situation to which the concept, used in that way, would apply… we shall not merely be saying what we do not know; we shall not really know what we are saying." See Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense*, Routledge, 1966. For another example, see Nagel, *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford University Press. 1989, 99-105.

[3] For a brief summary of the verificationist critique of metaphysics, see Uebel, "Vienna Circle." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006.

(1) Intuition of the object is necessary for a concept's reference to be verified (or justified).
(2) The verification of the reference (or justification) of a concept is necessary for the concept to have semantic content.
(3) So, if there can be no intuition of the object, then the concept can have no semantic content.

According to this argument, intuition of the object of a concept is a necessary condition for a concept to have any meaning whatsoever.

Verificationism about meaning has fallen out of fashion in philosophy, in part because the statement of its central thesis cannot itself be verified by experience and so is self-undermining. If Kant were proposing a verificationist, or quasi-verificationist, view of content, we would have good reason to reject it. Justificationism is still popular under the guise of inferential role semantics. But to attribute either of these views to Kant is to saddle him with bald contradictions. For example, there are several concepts that can *never* be justified from the point of view of theoretical philosophy, or for "theoretical reason," as Kant would put it, whether through perceptual experience or through any other means, but which, nevertheless, feature prominently, even foundationally, in Kant's practical philosophy, namely "God," "immortality," and, most importantly, "freedom." Not only can we never experience the objects of these concepts, as far as Kant is concerned, we can have no theoretical reason for applying them.[4] Nevertheless, Kant claims that the reality of transcendental freedom must be presupposed for the sake of genuine moral action, and that we are, on these practical grounds, entitled to believe in God and an immortal soul.[5] If these concepts were utterly semantically empty, simply because

[4] We do not even have a concept of what such an experience could be like or even what any empirical law would look like on the basis of which they could be posited. So we can, in principle, never verify (or falsify) them.

[5] We must presuppose freedom as a condition on practical reason. Kant writes, "…Freedom is necessary because those [moral] laws are necessary, as practical postulates. How this consciousness of moral laws or, what is the same thing, this consciousness of freedom is possible cannot be further explained; its admissibility can, however, be defended in the theoretical *Critique*," (*Ak* 5:46). See Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*. *Practical Philosophy*, Trans. Mary J. Gregor, Cambridge University Press, 1999, 176-177. Kant even claims that we can have *a priori*

their referents could not be intuited, what sense could we make of the functions they play in grounding Kant's practical philosophy?[6] The indispensable place of these concepts in Kant's moral theory precludes any reading of the first *Critique* that attributes to him the unqualified view that concepts without intuitions are utter nonsense or totally meaningless.

Moreover, in the theoretical domain, Kant posits fundamental physical forces (e.g., the attractive and repulsive forces), which are meant to explain the behavior of physical objects throughout the universe, but which themselves do not admit of any kind of direct perception or "confirming instance." They are, in some sense, verifiable, insofar as they are "*a priori* constructions" made on the basis of our *empirical* concepts of matter and motion, but they are certainly not justified in the way observational concepts (e.g. color concepts) are. Whatever function intuition plays in our knowledge of these fundamental forces, it is not the strong empiricist role of verification.

At the same time, we must make sense of Kant's repeated claims that, at least in the theoretical context, concepts like God and freedom are *empty*, or without sense and significance. If they are, what Kant calls, "mere ideas," then they possess the form of concepts but lack some specific kind of relation to objects, a relational property that "genuine concepts", whatever those turn out to be, must possess.[7] What precisely is the relation between genuine concepts and intuition, or perception, for Kant?[8] He writes,

---

knowledge (*Wissen*) of freedom because it is a necessary condition on the Moral Law of which we also have *a priori* knowledge. This knowledge, however, is relative to the practical use of reason and does not count as knowledge in the theoretical sense.

[6] Kant says that there can be moral data that establish the real possibility of this concept, but these are not data of intuition. See *Critique of Practical Reason* (*Ak.* 5:134-135). So the claim that intuition is necessary "for meaning" cannot be a general thesis about meaning, in our contemporary sense of semantic content.

[7] It is a well-known feature of Kant's epistemology that concepts and not just judgments or thoughts, can be *cognitions*. Yet there can also be empty concepts, which are not cognitions. Part of my aim here is to argue that a

> The possibility of a thought or of a concept rests on the law of non-contradiction… The thing of which even the mere thought is impossible (i.e., the concept is self-contradictory) is itself impossible. However, the thing of which the concept is possible is not therefore a possible thing. The first possibility may be called logical, the second, real possibility; the proof of the latter is the proof of the objective reality of the concept, which we are entitled to demand at any time. But it [the proof] can never be furnished otherwise than by presentation of the object corresponding to the concept; for otherwise it always remains a mere thought, of which, **until it is displayed in an example, it always remains uncertain whether any object corresponds to it, or whether it be empty, i.e. whether it may serve in any way for knowledge.**[9]

For Kant, thought in general, which includes thought that employs "empty" concepts, is constrained by the law of non-contradiction. The fact that a concept meets this constraint shows that it is conceivable, or "thinkable." Mere conceivability, however, is *epistemologically* insufficient to judge the "real possibility" of the object to which the concept refers. Here it might seem that Kant is requiring that we display the object in an example, or intuition, in order to determine whether it is really possible. Displaying the object in intuition, would, after all, establish that the concept has a referent and so would be a good candidate for knowledge.

---

concept's having "content" for Kant is, most importantly, an epistemological feature of the concept and not a purely semantic feature.

[8] None of this speaks against the view that Kant is also interested in the *a priori origins* of cognitions. The cognitive faculties referred to throughout the *Critique* are, for Kant, abilities to receive and combine data in certain ways and to produce representations. Sensibility is the *a priori* source of intuitions and the understanding is the *a priori* source of concepts. The various processes of synthesis are also part of the story of the *genesis* of cognitions. See Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*, Oxford University Press, 1993, and Kitcher, "Kant's Dedicated Cognitivist System," *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science*, 1990, Springer Netherlands, 1990, 189-209. See also Hanna, *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001, and Brook, *Kant and the Mind*, Cambridge University Press, 1994, 14. The question for our purposes is whether cognitions are the only type of state that can possibly refer. To put it another way, is reference to a knowable object the only kind of reference?

[9] See Kant, "What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?" *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Trans. Henry Allison et al. Cambridge University Press, 2002, (*Ak* 20:325). See also (B xxvi), "To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This "more," however need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones."

This reading would suggest that Kant is a verificationist about knowledge, and not about semantic content. Yet, again, he has reasons for resisting that position as well. Such a position would hold the following:

> (V-JUSTIFICATION) A concept C is justified if and only if the existence of C's referent can be verified by a confirming instance in intuition.[10]

The problem with attributing to Kant (V-JUSTIFICATION) is that it is simply too strong. It rules out the very crucial metaphysical concepts Kant spent so many years trying to defend, namely the categories. The categories (as chapter 1 argues) are justified not by individual intuitions but by relations that hold across the properties represented in individual intuitions. (V-JUSTIFICATION) also rules out the fundamental physical forces, which are posited to explain the behavior of matter but which are not directly justified by a single intuition. Kant's view of knowledge and justification thus cannot require that, for a concept to be justified, a single and *sufficient* confirming intuition display the object in an example.[11]

So what do we make of the function of intuition in Kant's claims about the emptiness or real possibility of a concept? In the above passage from the *Progress* essay, direct intuition is *a* sufficient means for *telling* whether a concept is empty. In the passage that we began with, however, at least under one reading, Kant does seem to say that *a concept itself is empty* if there is no "possibility of giving it an object [through intuition] to which it is to be related."[12] To

[10] It is strange to speak of a concept's being justified as opposed to the judgment or thought in which it features. For Kant, a concept's justification amounts to an entitlement the possessor of the concept has to apply the concept legitimately in knowledge claims. Its justification is thus tied to the justification of the judgments in which it can feature. See (A68/B93), where Kant claims that we can make no use of concepts except in judgment. Kant's aim in the *Critique* is to give us systematic reason for ruling out certain concepts and ruling in others for justified use in theoretical applications.

[11] Many thanks to Daniel Warren for helpful discussion on this topic.

[12] The passage is a little ambiguous actually. If "the latter" refers only to "an object," and not "the possibility of giving it an object," then "empty" would mean simply "without an object" in both passages. On this reading, intuition is not necessary for semantic content, but only for establishing that a concept really has an object.

begin, we can at least clearly distinguish two ways that Kant employs the term "empty," one semantic and the other epistemological. With respect to the semantic sense, a concept is semantically empty, or literally nonsense, if it can have no referent, or is contradictory. These concepts are not "logically possible." The epistemological sense of emptiness is less straightforward. We can say that, for Kant, intuition must play some role in, or be in some way drawn on, for the justification of the concept, if it is not to be epistemologically empty. The epistemological sense of content, or emptiness, must be further elaborated. Yet we can say with confidence that to conflate these two senses of content on Kant's behalf would be, in short, to equate "thought" with "cognition," two types of cognitive achievement which he clearly distinguishes. He writes, "To think (*denken*) of an object and to cognize (*erkennen*) an object are [thus] not the same," (B146).

The function of intuition in Kant's epistemology, while empiricist in spirit, permits a certain amount of rationalist leeway. His claim that intuition is necessary for establishing the real possibility of a concept is not to be mistaken with the claim that it is a necessary condition on establishing real possibility that the object be displayed in a single confirming instance. Although intuition is a necessary ingredient in establishing real possibility, a single intuition sufficient for verification of an object (or existential judgment) is not such a necessary ingredient.

Moreover, Kant's restriction of judgments of real possibility to the domain of intuition comes with one caveat and also depends on one assumption. The one caveat is that the judgments of possibility in which we are interested are made within the scope of the project of theoretical reason. Theoretical reason aims at a systematic view of what there really is in the world. (Practical reason, by contrast, aims at a systematic view of what we ought to do.) The

one assumption is that, according to Kant's faculty psychology, sensibility, the faculty of intuition, is the only *receptive* faculty, and thereby the only way we are put in direct contact with the reality of things. Intuition must therefore be called upon when theoretical reason is in the business of determining the reality of things.

Epistemologically empty concepts cannot feature in theoretical assertions, the types of knowledge claims under review in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. For a concept to legitimately feature in, or be used in, (synthetic) knowledge claims, the truth of the claim must, at least in principle, be demonstrable through experience, or empirical knowledge.[13] But, although intuition is a necessary ingredient in experience, experience is a much more cognitively sophisticated capacity than mere intuition. Not only does it involve judgment and the faculty of understanding, it requires a kind of systematic integration of judgments, which, ultimately, must appeal to intuition in its justification. Judgments of real possibility, according to Kant, are restricted to the domain of possible experience, which just is the domain in which intuition, in its receptive function, can be appealed to as evidence.

The theoretical knowledge in question is of a particular and narrow kind (henceforward "narrow knowledge," or "knowledge$_N$"), and it is with narrow knowledge that Kant, as well as this dissertation, is primarily concerned. Knowledge$_N$ excludes, for example, the knowledge we can have by analysis of the meaning of a concept. We can know in a wider sense, for example, that "Bachelors are unmarried adult men," simply by clarifying the concept through analysis. The claims we arrive at through the procedure of analysis are claims that we can grasp, or know, in a wider sense. But even in knowing the truth of analytic judgments, we do not thereby know

[13] Any object that conforms to the conditions of experience is possible, for Kant. That means it must, minimally, have spatio-temporal and categorial structure. (B266) It need not necessarily be empirically actual, or actually intuited, to be really possible. See chapters 2 and 3 for an elaboration on the postulates of actuality and possibility respectively.

the real possibility of their objects. They do not qualify as narrow knowledge, because there very well could be no bachelors in the world. Similarly, we can know in the wider sense that, "Grue is a color that sometimes looks green and sometimes looks blue," simply through our stipulation of the meaning of the fictional concept "grue," whether or not there are or could be any grue things.[14] Knowledge$_N$, the knowledge that is the special project of theoretical reason, is inextricably tied to the question what there really is or could be in the world – it *aims* at what there really is in the world – whether in empirical science, fundamental physics, metaphysics, or mathematics. For this reason, its claims are synthetic in form.[15]

This dissertation treats three puzzles, which are both textual and systematic in nature, that arise in light of Kant's views about the special place of intuition in his theory of knowledge$_N$, or in his theoretical epistemology. In the remainder of this introduction I raise these three puzzles and summarize my approach to each of them according to chapter.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 engages a puzzle that Kant struggled with during his silent decade and which inspired much of the Transcendental Analytic.[16] How do the categories, a particularly important set of *a priori* concepts, feature in knowledge$_N$ claims?[17] These concepts include, most

[14] Both bachelors and grue things are (of course) also really possible, insofar as they conform to the conditions for possible experience. The point is that the type of knowledge in question excludes knowledge by analysis.

[15] The real possibility of mathematical claims, according to Kant, depends in part on the *a priori* construction of mathematical figures in Euclidian space. However, *a priori* construction in imagination can only serve the function of establishing real possibility insofar as Euclidian space is the space through and in which we *empirically* perceive objects. So establishing the real possibility of even mathematical claims requires showing how these claims describe, or are true, of sensibility, as the capacity to be affected by *empirical* objects in space.

[16] See Kant, "Letter to Marcus Herz, February 27, 1772." *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics and the Letter to Marcus Herz, February 1772*, Trans. James W. Ellington, Hackett, 1977.

[17] Kant's familiar question of metaphysics is "How is synthetic a priori cognition possible?" or "How are synthetic a priori judgments possible?" "*Erkenntnis*" is most popularly translated as "cognition," yet was translated as

famously, the relations of substance-and-accident and cause-and-effect, but they also importantly include quantitative concepts like *totality*, qualitative concepts like *reality*, as well as all of the modal concepts, namely possibility, existence, and necessity (A80/B106). The categories pose a special problem for Kant's theory because of the kind of concepts they are. As *a priori* concepts, they purport to hold, in some sense, universally and necessarily. Yet, also as *a priori* concepts, they cannot be exhibited in the sensory "matter" of perception, or by direct intuition. Nor can we construct their objects *a priori* in intuition, the way we do with mathematical figures. How, then, can we show that they are really possible?[18]

The challenge of the "real possibility," or "objective reality," of the categories, qua pure *a priori* concepts, has two dimensions. It must be shown how we can know that they refer to real *objects*, given that we can only know objects by some appeal to *intuition*. I refer to this as the "object problem." But it must also be shown how they relate to real objects *universally and*

"knowledge" by Kemp Smith. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason.* London Macmillan, 1934. This seems justified by the fact that Kant also refers to "synthetic a priori knowledge (*Wissen*)." (fn, BXXi) Kant clearly uses "Erkenntnis" in a variety of senses. In the "Stufenleiter" passage he says, "The genus is **representation** in general (*repraesentatio*). Under it stands the representation with consciousness (*perceptio*). A **perception** [*Perzeption*] that refers to the subject as a modification of its state is a **sensation** (*sensatio*); an objective perception [*Perzeption*] is a **cognition** [Erkenntnis] (*cognitio*). The latter is either an **intuition** or a **concept** (intuitus vel conceptus)," (A320/B376-7, bold type and parenthetical Latin translations are in the text, bracketed German is added for convenience). In this passage "cognition" seems to refer to any representational state at all. On the other hand, he claims repeatedly that only from the *cooperation* of intuition and concepts can "cognition" arise (see, e.g., B146). Along these lines he contrasts cognition with mere thinking, insofar as cognition *requires* intuition. This sense of cognition seems to be closer in line with knowledge. Yet he also refers to "false cognition," in his discussion of the question, "What is truth?" in the Transcendental Logic. He writes, "If truth consists in the agreement of a cognition with its object, then this object must thereby be distinguished from others; for a *cognition is false* if it does not agree with the object to which it is related even if it contains something that could well be valid of other objects," (A58/B83, my italics). Obviously, at least in this passage, cognition cannot mean knowledge in the contemporary sense, because knowledge is always true. Cognition here might mean *judgment*, or a knowledge *claim*, or he might be using it in the sense of mere representation. In this dissertation, I am mostly interested in Kant's claims about cognition understood as constituting knowledge. Cognition in this sense makes up the contents of knowledge (*Wissen*). For more on the distinction between these two senses of cognition see Smit, "Kant on Marks and the Immediacy of Intuition," *The Philosophical Review*, 109.2 (2000), 235-266.

[18] See (A89-90/B122) for a clear statement of the problem. "The difficulty is revealed here that we did not encounter in the field of sensibility, namely how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity**, i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding."

necessarily, insofar as they are, for Kant, *a priori* laws of nature. I call this the "necessity problem." Because the categories are metaphysical concepts of this kind, they must be shown to apply *necessarily* (and not merely actually or possibly), to *all* objects.

In chapter 1, I argue that the Orthodox Conceptualist reception of Kant's argument for the real possibility of the categories fails to solve the object problem. According to that view, Kant argues that the categories apply to objects of experience to the extent that they are necessary conditions on the "synthesis," or cognitive processing, of perception. This is supposed to entail that Kant is a conceptualist about perceptual content. However, this reading renders mysterious how the categories can legitimately purport to hold of the *objects* perceived, rather than of the way the mind organizes perceptual information. Against this traditional reading, I argue that Kant is (and should be) a non-conceptualist about perception. I offer an alternative account of Kant's answer to the question of the real possibility of the categories, which depends on an examination of the chapter, "On the Schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding."

"Schemata," for Kant, are procedures or rules that a subject follows in applying a concept, either in recognizing instances of the concept, or in "constructing" the concept *a priori* in imagination (as occurs in mathematics). In recognizing an instance of an empirical concept, say, "dog," I follow a rule for recognition, namely that of a four-footed animal of a certain shape. In constructing a mathematical concept, say a triangle, *a priori* in imagination, I follow the schema for triangle, namely a closed three-sided figure, (A141/B180). The Schematism chapter engages the question how the categories, which are pure *a priori* concepts, ever apply in this way. They cannot be constructed *a priori* like triangles, but they also cannot be sensed in the matter of perception like dogs. To use Kant's phrase they are in no way "homogeneous" with

the "image" (A137-8/B176-7). There are no "confirming" images of them. The categories, Kant argues, must call upon intuition in a different way. Although the referents of the categories cannot be directly intuited, their schemata refer to relations that are represented across intuitions and through time, and subsequently grasped via what Kant calls a "synthesis."

The schemata of the categories therefore have two sides. On the one hand, they are rules or procedures that the subject must (at some level) *understand* to be able to apply a category. In this sense they consist in justification conditions. On the other hand, they also *refer to*, or describe, those aspects of the world that must be perceivable through *sensibility*, and subsequently recognized, if the concept is to be rightly applied. If, for example, I am to correctly apply the category of "substance" in an empirical judgment, I must perceive the persistence of a thing through time. Although persistence cannot be directly represented through a single intuition, it can be perceived across intuitions, over time. Insofar as the perception of persistence occurs across intuitions, the intuitions themselves must directly and antecedently represent *relational* properties that, when taken together, are represented as relations of persistence. These properties must be represented antecedently to any synthesis whatsoever.

The fact that the schemata are not just procedures, but also refer to sensible conditions that are represented most primitively across intuitions, solves the object problem. We can know that the categories apply to real objects, because their justification conditions refer to properties (specifically temporal properties) that can be given across intuitions.

Kant gives a transcendental argument for the existence of these schemata. He argues that they are procedures the mind must follow in order to determine the objective positions of things in *time*. Kant's solution to the problem of the categories therefore makes a certain important assumption; namely, that we cognitive subjects are capable of determining the objective

positions of things in empirical time. The necessity problem is only solved under the assumption that *any* object (or property) that comes before us *can be* determined in time. If we assume this premise, then, necessarily, all perception will fall under this or that schema, and so "stand under" the categories.[19] The schemata are universally present in all perception *insofar as* objects can be objectively determined.

Solving the necessity problem requires distinguishing two kinds of transcendental condition. The schemata are transcendental conditions on intuition, in the specific sense that they are necessary *only if* we are to be able to *use* intuition towards certain cognitive ends, e.g. in judging that some event lasted from one noon to the next. The schemata are thus not *constitutive* conditions on intuition *per se*, because they depend on a particular assumption about the *use* we can make of intuition. By contrast, a non-human animal with fully functioning perceptual faculties might not be able to make time-determinations and so would have no need for the schemata.[20] It is therefore important to distinguish *constitutive* transcendental conditions from, what we might call *use-relative* transcendental conditions. Space and time are *constitutive* transcendental conditions on intuition, while the schemata, and thereby the categories, are use-relative conditions on intuition, necessary only insofar as we are to *use* intuition to make objective temporal judgments.

---

[19] Kant does give some reason for thinking we *should* assume this premise, "…The Schematism of the understanding through the transcendental synthesis of imagination comes down to nothing other than the unity of all the manifold of intuition in inner sense, and thus indirectly to the unity of apperception, as the function that corresponds to inner sense (to a receptivity)" (A145-6/B185). While there is nothing straightforward about this passage, it is clear that Kant thinks that unity of the manifold in inner sense is accomplished through the schemata, the transcendental time-determinations, and that this "corresponds to" the unity of apperception. The idea (I gather) is that time-determination is a condition on the coherence of the stream of consciousness (inner sense) and that this is necessary for the apperception of my states, a requirement of their belonging to a single *knower*. I discuss issues related to apperception and inner sense in chapters 1 and 2.

[20] The schemata qua conditions *in* perception *may still* actually be present in the perception of animals and pre-cognitive human infants. However, the *necessity* of their presence does not apply, unless the animals are to make use of them for further cognitive tasks.

To return briefly to the question about "empty" concepts and content with which we began, the problem of the objective reality, or real possibility, of the categories is not really a question about how the categories can be semantically meaningful. Kant writes:

> …If one leaves out the sensible determination of persistence [the schema for substance], substance would signify nothing more than a something that can be thought as a subject (without being a predicate of something else). Now out of this representation I can make nothing, as it shows me nothing at all about what determinations the thing that is to count as such a first subject is to have. Without schemata, therefore, the categories are only functions of the understanding for thinking, but do not represent *any object*. This significance comes to them from sensibility, which realizes the understanding at the same time as it restricts it. (A147/B186-7, my brackets, my italics.)

A cursory reading of this passage might suggest that, without the schemata, the categories do not have any meaning, insofar as they do not "represent any object." But to emphasize the last sentence at the expense of the rest of the paragraph overlooks the claim that, without the schema, what is left over of the content is only "something that can be thought as a subject (without being a predicate of something else)." This thought is meaningful, but it cannot be justifiably applied in judgment to any known, or knowable, *objects*, once we subtract the schemata.

To the extent that Kant is making claims about the "meanings" of categories, he is arguing that their only meaningful, or legitimate, *theoretical use* is their empirical use. Demonstrating that the categories are *not empty for* theoretical reason requires showing that they are really possible and so have some relation to intuition.[21] After all, these concepts can also gain "meaning" and "significance" for the practical use of reason. Just as *cognitions* can have epistemological content in the theoretical context, it seems they can have normative, or practical, content, in the practical context.

[21] Because the categories are metaphysical concepts, establishing their real possibility requires showing not only that they could have instances, but that they necessarily do. This is the point of the necessity problem discussed above.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 draws on the theory of time-determination sketched in the "Schematism" to answer a challenge posed by the Cartesian skeptic to the grounding function of intuition in Kant's theory of knowledge$_N$. Cartesian "idealism," or skepticism about the external world, poses a prima facie threat to the sufficiency of perception for judgments of actuality, as Kant conceives of them. The postulate of actuality states, "That which is connected (*zusammenhängt*) with the material conditions of experience (of sensation) is **actual**," (A218/B266). "Connection with" sensation, the "matter" of intuition, it seems, is necessary and *sufficient* for judgments about the existence of things. But if I do not know whether I am trapped in a global hallucination, or a perpetual dream state, then it would seem perception is insufficient to ground judgments of actuality, or so the Cartesian argument goes.

In chapter 2, I argue for an interpretation of the Refutation of Idealism that makes further use of Kant's views about the necessary conditions on time-determination. His reply assumes a certain Cartesian premise, namely that we can know ourselves as objectively time-determinable selves. Kant thinks Descartes should grant this premise, if self-knowledge is to play a foundational role in theoretical philosophy as Descartes thinks it should. Yet, if we grant this premise, certain other necessary conditions must obtain.

In the "Schematism," and then later in the "First Analogy of Experience," Kant argues that the *perception of persistence* is a condition on all time-determination.[22] His argument for this claim is that, because my awareness of my own mental states *as such* is always successive, while the objective temporal relations that hold among things in the world include both succession *and simultaneity*, my ever-successive awareness of the stream of my own states is

[22] For the relevant passage on persistence in the "Schematism," see (A144/B183). The argument of the First Analogy begins at (A182/B225-26).

insufficient for judging the objective temporal properties of the things my mental states are about. So, to determine *objective* temporal features of the world, I must represent a persisting thing in the content of perception, which serves as a *substratum* of all other temporal properties, and, subsequently, my representation of time. In an effort to refute the Cartesian, Kant then applies this reasoning to our capacity to determine *our own* objective existence in time.[23] Roughly, if I can represent myself as a time-determinable thing in the world, and if, as Kant argues in the Schematism and the First Analogy, all time-determination presupposes something persistent in perception, then my representation of myself as objectively time-determinable will only count as knowledge, if the persisting things I (could) draw on to objectively determine myself in time, actually exist.

Kant's result however, is only a conditional one, insofar as it assumes that we can determine ourselves in time. Even if this argument were sound, it does not defeat external world skepticism in the knockdown way we, or the extreme skeptic, might want. Rather, it simply shows that veridical perception of an external world is a necessary condition on all genuine experience, or empirical knowledge, whether of outer things in space and time, or my self as an objective time-determinable thing. Of course, an extreme skeptic could certainly call into doubt such a capacity, in which case, we would still have to call into doubt the external world.

According to Kant, however, his argument is successful if, minimally, "the game that idealism plays has with greater justice been turned against it," (B276). His aim is first and foremost to defend his postulate of actuality, which only requires showing that an object's connection with perception is sufficient for judging its actuality. That is, he aims to show that perception itself, as a faculty, is *immediate*. As immediate, perception can be trusted, insofar as

[23] Argument begins at (B225).

it puts the subject in direct contact with reality. If he can show this much about the faculty of perception, perhaps he can rest content with the merely conditional answer to the external world skeptic.

Moreover, if Kant has managed to argue the point about the *immediacy* of perception, then he has at least advanced the skeptical debate from a question about the reliability of the faculty of perception (as opposed to the intellectual faculty), to a higher-order issue about whether we can know that we are now or ever have genuinely enjoyed perception at all. Shifting the debate in this way is not only significant as a historical point, but also reveals that Kant has other systematic resources for treating this new framing of the skeptical problem. If the problem of external-world skepticism turns out not about the sufficiency of perception *per se* for judging actuality, but about whether we can have knowledge of having ever enjoyed perception at all, then Kant's own Transcendental Idealism suggests a way of *dismissing* it. The new question is not about the perceptual grounds of our knowledge of the existence of external objects at all, but rather about the human cognitive situation as such, and whether we can have higher order knowledge of it. If it is in-principle impossible for us to draw on experience to determine whether or not we are in a normal cognitive situation, or whether we have ever really perceived at all, then the question itself, taken in precisely this transcendent sense, cannot be posed for theoretical reason. That is, the truth or falsity of the claim cannot be inquired into, because experience can never be called upon as evidence either way and in any sense. We have, to use Kant's terminology, no "insight" into its possibility.[24] I develop these claims about Transcendental Idealism further in chapter 3.

[24] While I take the reconstruction I give to be a charitable one, it still faces some difficult external challenges. From the contemporary point of view, it may seem implausible that Kant could hit on *the* conditions of time-determination through *a priori* reflection. We might think that these types of conditions can only be known empirically. Moreover, philosophers of a more rationalist persuasion might challenge some of Kant's empiricist strands. They

Chapter 3

In this chapter, I raise a puzzle about how to understand one of the central theses of Transcendental Idealism, namely the claim that empirical knowledge, and consequently knowledge$_N$ more generally, is (in some sense) restricted to the domain of appearances and so does not teach us about things in themselves. If Kant thinks that intuition must necessarily be called upon for knowledge$_N$, because sensibility is our only means of being in direct receptive contact with reality, then on what grounds should we think that the knowledge delivered by sensibility, including natural science, is in any way restricted, limited, or degraded?

Kant's Copernican turn asks us to engage in an "experiment of pure reason," according to which, contrary to the ordinary methodological order of things, we assume that objects agree with our ways of experiencing them (BXVi-BXViii). Insofar as objects conform to these ways, they must meet certain "transcendental" conditions. If and only if objects meet these conditions do we have cognitive access to them. But, because our access is circumscribed, the way we represent the things that meet these conditions may or may not be comprehensive, or complete. We may or may not represent all and every feature of them. The concept of "things in themselves" is the concept of things as they might be whether or not they meet the conditions for our knowledge. It is the concept of the way things would be known if we (or any mind) could possibly know the way things are "in general," or the way they are regardless whether they meet these epistemic conditions.[25]

---

might think there is no good reason to grant that we cannot represent time, or ourselves in it, through intellection alone. See, for example, Burge, *Origins of Objectivity*, Oxford University Press, 2010, 524, and Peacocke, "First Person Illusions: Are they Descartes' or Kant's?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 26.1 (2012): 247-275.

[25] Hoke Robinson understands the notion of things-in-themselves in terms of a god's-eye perspective. I'm sympathetic to this reading and much of what I say about Transcendental Idealism is consistent with this idea. However, it is important to note that Kant does not even allow us to *assert* that the god's eye point of view is a really

Because we are engaged in this experiment of pure reason, there is no inconsistency in entertaining the possibility of things as they might be just as such, or *in general*. The concept of things in themselves is thus logical possible. But because, by definition, things in themselves can never be experienced by minds like ours, we "have no *insight* into their real possibility." That is, we can *assert* their *real possibility* just as little as we can *deny* it. Although we cannot know them, "room remains," as Kant puts it, "for more and other objects; they cannot therefore be absolutely denied," (A287/B344).

Kant claims that this concept of things-in-themselves, or, alternatively, "noumena in the negative sense," is responsible for the epistemic limit the critical philosophy places on the deliverances of *intuition*. He writes,

> The concept of a **noumenon,** i.e., of a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself (solely through a pure understanding), is not at all contradictory; for one cannot assert of sensibility that it is the only possible kind of intuition. Further, *this concept is necessary in order not to extend sensible intuition to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition*… (A254/B310, my italics).

Now the puzzle arises: How does a mere idea, the object of which we cannot ever even hope to assert is really (metaphysically) possible, set any actual limit or restriction on the epistemic reach of empirical knowledge? How does merely *entertaining* the possibility of other ways of knowing, lead us to restrict the "objective validity" of the deliverances of sensibility, our own best means of accessing with reality of things. Why should we think that sensibility puts us in touch *only with* appearances and never with things in general, or "in themselves." The puzzle is compounded by the fact that, because we arrive at the idea of "things in themselves," or "noumena," *completely a priori*, cannot even in principle draw on experience for justifying an

---

possible perspective. See Robinson, "Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearances and Things in Themselves," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 32.3 (1994): 411-441. See also chapter 3 below.

assertion of the possibility of noumena *as a real one*. If conceivability, or logical possibility, is insufficient for telling us the way things really are, or even the way they could be, why should, in this case, the mere logical possibility of the "empty" *idea* of noumena place an *actual* limit on the epistemic reach of sensibility, or tell us anything about the way *we* really are, cognitively speaking? Why should we view the deliverances of sensibility, the gold-standard for synthetic knowledge, as epistemologically restricted *by a mere idea*? It seems that we should simply say, "That's just an idea, and we can think whatever we like."

The puzzle is a methodological one. It raises questions about Kant's motivations for positing the distinction between appearances and things in themselves in the first place. In chapter 3, I argue that the resolution of this puzzle favors one interpretation of Transcendental Idealism over the others. Ultimately, although we cannot have knowledge of noumena, or things in themselves, or even their real possibility, the idea still sets a limit on empirical knowledge to the extent that we *can* know *a priori* that we can never *rule them out*. However the limit on empirical knowledge thereby suggested is merely one of scope, or quantity, and not one of quality. We cannot know that our way of knowing gets at *all* there is to know. Yet we have no reason to infer from this quantitative limit alone that the empirical knowledge we gather about that portion of reality to which we do have access *is failing* to genuinely access the way things (or that portion of things) *really* are, or at the way they *essentially* are. To make this further inference itself steps outside the domain of legitimate assertions of real possibility.

Other readings of Transcendental Idealism, however, such as traditional two-worlds readings, or more currently popular, "moderate" two-aspects readings, speculate about the relations that run between appearances and things in themselves. Any speculation to the effect that things in themselves are the *really real* ground, cause, or explanation of the less real world

of appearances transgresses the bounds of possible experience, and the bounds of legitimate assertion of real possibility. Any speculation that *asserts* that the *aspect* of things to which we have access *is not* the only aspect, or the most fundamental aspect, mistakenly attempts to determine the *real* possibility of things in general. As Kant puts it,

> ""What kind of constitution does a transcendental object have?" one cannot indeed give an answer saying **what it is,** but one can answer that the **question** itself **is nothing,** because no object for the question is given," (A479/B507).

Of course, in saying that the question is nothing, Kant means the question is nothing for theoretical reason, and so cannot be a question of narrow knowledge. This resolution of Kant's puzzle suggests a distinction between metaphysical possibility *per se*, and metaphysical *inquirability*. Metaphysical *inquirability* is a methodological, or epistemological, modal. Only those objects the real possibility of which follows from possible experience can be objects of theoretical judgments of reason. Because the domain of legitimate metaphysical inquiry is thereby circumscribed to the sphere of possible experience, whatever metaphysical principles we arrive at cannot be said to hold of things in general, but only for objects that fall within that circumscribed domain. Therefore, while things in themselves, or noumena, can never be objects of possible metaphysical *inquiry*, they might, for all we can know, be metaphysically possible, or even actual.

The tension between the "emptiness" of the concept of noumena and the epistemic role it plays in limiting the "pretensions" of sensibility is resolved once we see that the critical turn together with the subsequent distinction between appearances and things in themselves is most centrally of methodological and *not* metaphysical significance. The concept of "noumena" is empty *for metaphysics as a science*, but it is not thereby entirely meaningless, nor is it necessarily without a real object (as far as we know). We might, nevertheless, have perfectly

good *practical* grounds for *believing* in the type-identity of some appearances, namely our minds, with some noumena, namely our transcendent souls.[26] We might also have very good reasons for thinking that other noumena, e.g. God and angels, are not token identical with any appearances. However, it seems that even practical reason is silent on the issue whether empirical *objects* are token-identical with corresponding noumenal objects or grounds, or with things in themselves, the question that has been central to the two-worlds versus two-aspects debate. Not only is this question itself "nothing" for theoretical reason, it also is really of no concern to practical reason either.[27]

In the end, Kant's claims about "content" bear some affinities with pragmatism, although not as a semantic theory.[28] We find support of this type of reading throughout Kant's writings, in his many references to the "uses" and "aims" of reason, and in his commitment to limit (theoretical) knowledge (*Wissen*) to make room for [practical] belief (*Glauben*). The difference,

[26] Robert Adams makes a similar point. See, Adams, "Things in Themselves." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57.4 (2010): 801-825.

[27] This is a difficult interpretive issue. Kant also claims in the *Critique* that although we cannot cognize things in themselves, we must be able to *think* them, to avoid the "absurd conclusion that there is appearance without anything that appears." (Bxxvi-xxvii). This passage suggests that Kant thinks that the idea of things in themselves follows *analytically* from the concept of appearances. This is Henry Allison's (1983) position. The fact of analyticity, however, tells us nothing about whether appearances and things in themselves are token identical or not. Moreover, it does not tell us how to understand the predicate "not a thing in itself," which is contained in the concept "appearances." We know already from the discussion of knowledge above, that analysis only tells us what is contained in the *concept*, and not that the objects of the concept are *real possibilities* let alone actual. I think Kant's strongest approach to the question of token-identity is the *dissolution* of it.

[28] I use the term "pragmatism" with some trepidation. I *do not* believe that Kant was a pragmatist about truth or meaning. Kant's definition of "truth" is "the agreement of a cognition with its object," and not, say, the fated agreement of our cognitions with everyone else's at the idealized end of inquiry. He distinguishes between truth, which is an "objective property" and holding-to-be true, which is a subjective property. (See Kant, *Jäsche Logic*, *Lectures on Logic*, Trans. Michael Young, Cambridge University Press, 1992, 557, *Ak* 48). Kant's definition resonates with a correspondence view of truth. His "pragmatism," as I'm calling it, has more to do with justification. The conditions for assent, or judgment, in a certain field of inquiry are relative to the aim of the inquiry. The aim, however, is internal to the inquiry, and depends on the "interests of reason" as such, and not on the interests of this or that agent. If a concept does not meet the conditions for assent, then it should be ruled out for consideration in that domain. It is "*meaningless for*," which is to say *useless in*, that domain, but not altogether meaningless. I think Kant can consistently hold this position without making the additional pragmatist claims about semantic content as such. (However some readings of the text may support even that additional claim).

of course, is that the aims and goals of the variety of uses of reason, for Kant, are essential to the nature of the inquiry relative to that use. In the *Jäsche Logic* he writes,

> "A belief of [practical] reason can never aim at theoretical cognition… for there [in theoretical cognition] objectively insufficient holding-to-be-true is merely opinion. It is merely a presupposition of reason for a subjective though absolutely necessary practical purpose…" (JL, fn 69).

In the context of practical reason, for Kant, a belief in God or the immortal soul is absolutely necessary. Yet the very same propositions, when entertained in the context of theoretical knowledge, evaporate under the scrutiny of critique; they do not even count as beliefs, because, in the context of theoretical cognition, there is little room for belief. [29,30]

Now let us turn to the first of our three puzzles.

---

[29] We find additional evidence for this pragmatic streak in the *Jäsche Logic*. There Kant lists seven degrees of "objective content." These degrees of *content* are measures by which "cognition…can be graded." (64-5). They include, (1) " to represent something (*sich etwas vorstellen*)," (2) "to represent something with consciousness, or *to perceive* (*wahrnemen*)," (3) "to be acquainted (*kennen*) with something, or to represent something in comparison with other things, both as to *sameness* and as to *difference*," (4) "to be acquainted with something *with consciousness*, i.e., to *cognize* (*erkennen*) it," (5) *to understand* something…, i.e., to cognize something *through the understanding by means of concepts*, or to *conceive* (*concipiren*),"[29] (6) "to cognize something through reason, or *to have insight* into it," (7) "*to comprehend* something, i.e. to cognize something through reason or *a priori* to the degree that is sufficient for our purpose. For all our comprehension is only *relative*, i.e., sufficient for a certain purpose; we do not comprehend anything *without qualification*," (*Jäsche Logic*, *Ak.* 65).

These are seven degrees of the perfection of the *content* of "objective cognition." Perfection in this sense seems to correspond to the *completeness* of the representation, i.e. the amount and quality of information it delivers. Kant claims that even the highest form of *a priori* cognition, comprehension (*begreifen*), is *purpose*-relative. The perfection of its content is its distinguishing mark, or what makes it comprehension. If even this degree of perfection is relative to a purpose, then it seems that, for Kant, "content" has epistemic significance, and not merely semantic significance.

[30] This may be a little hyperbolic. Kant does say we can have a "doctrinal" belief in God, which is still "theoretical." This doctrinal belief is justified by the fact that an assumption of an intelligent designer is (on Kant's view) a useful ideal for the systematic investigation of nature. The belief that nature is purposive, or suited to our faculty of reason in its systematic nature, would be justified by the belief in an intelligent designer. But "doctrinal beliefs," for Kant, are utterly pragmatic. They are *useful* beliefs to have for the sake of natural science, but they are not themselves knowable (or disprovable) metaphysical claims.

Chapter 1: Perceptual Content, Schemata, and the Applicability of the Categories

Kant writes:

(I) (B132) That representation that can be given prior to all thinking is called **intuition.**

(A91/B123) …Intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking.

He also writes,

(II) (B161) …All synthesis, through which even perception itself becomes possible, stands under (*steht*…*unter*) the categories…

A clear textual puzzle arises in the *Critique* from trying to reconcile claims like these. How can "intuition," Kant's term for a perceptual state, be given independently of the functions of thinking, if the "synthesis" necessary for perception "stands under the categories," the very concepts that Kant identifies with the functions for thinking? [1] Either application of the categories is a necessary condition for perception or not. If so, then perceptual content must have conceptual structure.[2] If not, then perceptual content likely has independent structure.

Traditionally, commentators have interpreted away (I), the claim that intuition can be given "prior to the functions of thinking." This claim, they argue, points to a distinction between the contributions our perceptual and conceptual faculties make to human cognitive

[1] Strictly speaking, only empirical intuitions are, or constitute, "perceptual states," in our contemporary sense. The "*a priori*" intuitions of space and time (those required for mathematics, according to Kant) are only "perceptual" to the extent that they are issued by the umbrella faculty of sensibility. However they are "a priori intuited" or imagined rather than sensed.

[2] "Experience" (*Erfahrung*) for Kant refers to a kind of empirical knowledge. Throughout, I use the term in this sense, unless otherwise indicated.

representations, but not to a distinction between two types of intentional content. [3, 4] Let's call this position Orthodox Conceptualism.

A second group of commentators argue that the "synthesis," or process of combination, under which all perception stands is governed, not by the categorial concepts, but by *pre-conceptual* rules, and in so being governed produces perceptual contents which are *conceptualizable*. Let's call this position Weak Non-Conceptualism.[5] On Weak Non-

[3] Orthodox Conceptualists include Sellars, *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Harvard University Press, 1997; McDowell, *Mind and World*, Harvard University Press, 1994; Engstrom, "Understanding and Sensibility," *Inquiry*, 49.1 (2006): 2-25; and one of the views articulated in Ginsborg, "Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?" *Philosophical Studies*,137.1 (2008): 65-77. Ginsborg gives a clear outline of the Orthodox Conceptualist position, but then offers an additional interpretation of the notion of "concept," according to which concepts are merely perceptions of things together with the awareness that things are being perceived as they *should* be. She thinks that Kant's view of the function of the categories is consistent with the view that we have – and must have – a primitive awareness of normativity in the very perception of objects. That is, in perception, we are necessarily aware that we are perceiving things as we should. In this chapter, I do not explicitly address this qualified version of Conceptualism, but the arguments I give against Orthodox Conceptualism also hold against it. In this unqualified form, Ginsborg's primitive-normativity view also seems to face problems of consistency with some of Kant's claims in the Refutation of Idealism. If we can be aware that we are "perceiving as we should" merely by perceiving then it seems hard to explain how Cartesian skepticism gets off the ground, or, for that matter, how Kant means to reply to it. While I agree that any awareness that we are "perceiving as we should" would be concept-directed, it seems to me to put the cart before the horse as a view about perceptual content as such.

[4] While this is the traditional Orthodox Conceptualist line, there is also a version of Non-Conceptualism that is consistent with the view as I've presented it. Conceptualism holds that, if there is a pre-conceptual contribution made by sensibility, it must come in the form of pre-conscious inputs, or "sensations," which are then processed through the understanding to form conceptualized perceptual content. The Non-Conceptualism that fits this line grants that while there is a distinction between *state* types, between intuitional and conceptual states, the distinction is one between *vehicle* types and not content types. Lucy Allais argues that we can remain silent on the nature of perceptual content so long as we make room for two state types. See Allais, "Kant, Non-conceptual Content and the Representation of Space," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 4.3 (2009): 383-413. On Allais' view, intuitions and concepts might both have the same type of content and still be distinct state types. However, the contemporary debate between state-type and content-type views of perceptual content has, I think rightly, shifted the burden of proof onto state-type theorists. If state types are not explained by content type, the state type theorist must explain what the distinction between state types (or vehicle types) amounts to. One reason to think such a task might be difficult to accomplish is that both beliefs and perceptions represent the world as being such-and-such a way, and both have species of veridicality conditions. Therefore, we cannot simply appeal to a belief's *force*, a "holding true," to distinguish it from perception. See Bermúdez, "What is at Stake in the Debate on Nonconceptual Content?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 21.1 (2007): 55-72; and Heck, "Nonconceptual Content and the "Space of Reasons,"" *The Philosophical Review*, 109.4 (2000): 483-523.

[5] Weak Non-Conceptualists include Longuenesse, (2005). *Kant on the Human Standpoint*, Cambridge University Press, 2005; Pendlebury, "Making Sense of Kant's Schematism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55.44 (1995): 777-797; and Pendlebury, "The Role of Imagination in Perception," *South African Journal of Philosophy*,15.4 (1996): 133-138. Robert Hanna also argues that the schemata are preconceptual syntheses of the imagination, but he holds the view that these syntheses act on an even lower level of content. See Hanna, *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*, Oxford University Press, 2006.

Conceptualism, perception constitutively depends on a certain form of pre-conceptual synthesis and has a content that is distinct in kind from conceptual content.

There is a third possible way out. This way aims to clarify (II), the claim that the synthesis that makes perception possible stands under the categories. On this line, we must distinguish "intuition," understood as a more primitive form of perceptual state, from what Kant (sometimes) calls "perception," which requires a synthesis. On this reading, all intuitions "stand under" the categories in a certain special sense, namely insofar as they can be called upon, in and through acts of "perception," to justify certain types of judgment. In being synthesized in an act of perceiving, they become *useful* towards a certain cognitive end necessary for science and systematic philosophy, namely the end of *determining* the objective properties of things *as objective*. These judgments are higher level cognitive acts through which a subject comes to form a systematic view of the world. The categorical judgment, "The rock **is** heavy," counts as the relevant kind of high-level judgment, if it involves some implicit awareness that a connection between subject and predicate holds *of the object* and not merely of one's own subjective states.[6] "Objective determinations" or "determinations of the object," on this view involve some degree of self-awareness, and "determining objectivity" involves *conceiving* objects *as* standing apart from one's own subjective states.[7] These types of judgment are paradigmatic of scientific

[6] It does not seem true that all categorical thought, qua thought, requires an awareness of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Of course the fact that it seems false does not mean it is not Kant's view. However, a more plausible version of this view, and one that I think interpreters of this camp would endorse, is that the cases in question are not all mere thoughts of the categorical form but only those made as genuine *assertions* about the reality of things in the context of theoretical philosophy or science. In scientific judgments about the way things are objectively, for example, awareness of the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity is ever-present.

[7] There are two strands to Kant's thinking about objectivity, one having to do roughly with the distinction between seeming and being, and another having to do roughly with the distinction between partial, piecemeal representation ("mere appearance") and comprehensive, systematic knowledge ("the one experience"). On the one hand, it is clear that Kant thinks that there is a connection between a robust kind of objectivity and knowledge claims with categorial form. He claims that the "aim of the copula **is**" in categorical judgments is to distinguish objective validity from subjective validity, (B141-42). On the other hand, it is also clear that Kant thinks that *genuinely* objective determinations are made *systematically*. There is an interpretive question how exactly to reconcile these two

knowledge claims. If the categories are necessary for these kinds of self-conscious cognitive acts, then intuitions can be and are consciously "given" prior to any role for the understanding. Although intuitions *per se* need not involve antecedent application of the categories, they nevertheless "stand under" the categories by virtue of being synthesized and *synthesizable.* Through synthesis, they become "fit" or "suitable" to play some role in the justification of judgments that do apply the categories. Let's call this position Strong Non-Conceptualism.[8,9]

Strong Non-Conceptualism understands Kant's many claims about the relations that hold between the understanding and sensibility as a matter of their cooperation in achieving certain cognitive ends. Primarily, these claims are not about the nature of content, whether perceptual or conceptual, although they do presuppose and suggest that Kant held certain views about

---

strategic strands in Kant's thought. In the *Critique* he takes a piecemeal perspective on the mind's abilities in order to see, from the ground up, how the mind achieves cognition of objects as objective. Yet, full cognition of the objective situation of things, of the theoretical and scientific sort, requires systematicity, a cognitive achievement that seems to require a *final*, or, at least, comprehensive perspective. In the "First Introduction" to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant raises some (at least prima facie) doubts about the possibility of fully integrating all our empirical knowledge claims on empirical grounds alone. (*Ak*. 20:203). See Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Trans. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood, Cambridge University Press, 2001. While I do not engage this question directly here, I believe the distinction between two types of transcendental condition outlined below might be of some use toward this end.

[8] Other Strong Non-Conceptualist readings of Kant include Burge, (2010). There Burge argues that Kant avoids the mistake made by "Individual Representationalism" that Conceptualists would gladly attribute to him, namely that to enjoy objective representation at all requires representing the conditions for objective representation. He also shares the view that Kant was "not primarily concerned with conditions on representing the physical world. He explains conditions on an ability self-consciously to *justify* representation of a world conceived as mind-independent…Cognition and experience are assumed to be epistemic states of beings capable of deliberation and of science," (155-56). For more on Strong Non-Conceptualism see also Hanna, (2006), Hanna, "Kant and Nonconceptual Content," *European Journal of Philosophy*, 13.2 (2005): 247-290; and Hanna, "Kantian Non-conceptualism," *Philosophical Studies*, 137.1 (2008): 41-64. In the (2008) paper Hanna argues that there are certain intuitions of space that have in-principle non-conceptual contents. His reading appeals to Kant's argument from incongruent counterparts. Hanna argues that represent incongruent counterparts at all, he thinks, suggests that the representation of space is a non-conceptual content. Our concepts, according to Hanna, are in-principle incapable of capturing the distinctive properties of incongruent counterparts. Our intuition of incongruent counterparts is thus more fine-grained than the concepts we use to describe it.

[9] Contemporary proponents of Strong Non-Conceptualism about perceptual content include Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts*, MIT Press, 1992; Heck, "Nonconceptual Content and the "Space of Reasons,"" *The Philosophical Review*, 109.4 (200): 483-523; Bermúdez, "What is at Stake in the Debate on Nonconceptual Content?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 21.1 (2007): 55-72; Burge, *Origins of Objectivity*, Oxford University Press, 2010.

perceptual content. If Kant's claim is not that synthesis is necessary for intuitions *to have content*, but rather that synthesis picks out and combines certain intuited contents in order to use them for certain cognitive ends, then, this view suggests, the intuitions antecedently must possess some content independent of the understanding. If intuitions are synthesized for the sake of being used for and according to certain high-level cognitive ends, i.e. when a subject is engaged in scientific judgments about the way things stand objectively, their content must have some antecedent structure on which this synthesis operates. Insofar as the synthesis operates *on* intuition, the structure of the original content of intuition will be distinct in kind from the conceptual structure brought by perceptual judgment in pursuing these higher-level cognitive ends.[10] This holds whether the type of cognitive end being pursued is pursued only some of the time, quite frequently, or even all of the time.

In this chapter, I argue that Kant is and should be a Non-Conceptualist about perceptual content of the Strong variety.[11] Of course the plausibility of Strong Non-Conceptualism hinges on making sense of those passages and themes in the text that seem to support Orthodox Conceptualism, the view that has had most influence in the history of Kant's readership. More generally, it seems that the plausibility of any reading of Kant's views on perceptual content rests on meeting the following two demands: First, it should account for passages like (II), which

[10] There is also a fourth way out that I do not discuss here. Colin McLear argues that in intuition, we are directly related to an object in such a way as intuition does not require representational content. See McLear, "Kant on Perceptual Content," *Mind*, (forthcoming). In the contemporary manifestation of this debate, a similar position is held by Campbell, *Reference and Consciousness*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002, e.g., p. 71. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I assume that Kant subscribes to some content view about perception.

[11] To clarify, I think Kant must be a Strong Non-Conceptualist, but I take this view to be consistent with many aspects (although not all) of Weak Non-Conceptualism. It is very likely that Kant thinks there are layers of content, in the sense that there could be degrees of the penetration of perception by concepts and by the understanding in general. Perhaps Kant thought that there is some level of non-conceptual synthesis, as Weak Non-Conceptualism argues. My goal here is to argue that the most primitive layer of conscious sensory content is non-conceptual and unsynthesized by the categories. More specifically, my goal is to highlight the nature of the types of transcendental conditions that the categories and their schemata are on this primitive content.

claims that all synthesis, through which perception becomes possible, stands under the categories. These passages have been the strongest textual motivation for Orthodox Conceptualism. Second, it must respect Kant's fundamental distinction between the two *independent* sources of cognition, faculties which "can never exchange their functions," (A51-75), manifest in passages like (I). Intuition, Kant claims, *in no way requires* the understanding and is given *prior* to all thinking. I argue that Strong Non-Conceptualism reveals new resources for explaining both the fundamental difference between the two "ancestral" faculties, and also articulating the nature of their necessary cooperation in achieving the end of objective cognition. These resources, I believe, are obscured by Orthodox Conceptualism and Weak Non-Conceptualism. Towards this end and in accommodating Kant's many "standing-under" claims, I offer a new argument against Orthodox Conceptualism, which appeals to and aims to undermine the central systematic and interpretive motivation for the view, namely, its account of Kant's argument for the justified application of the categories to objects of experience, or, to use Kant's terminology, for the "real possibility," or "objective reality," of the categories.[12]

I begin, in section 1, by raising and replying to Orthodox Conceptualism's account of that argument, which runs roughly as follows: The categories apply to objects of experience if and only if the categories are conditions for the possibility of perception. The categories are such conditions. So, the categories apply to objects. I raise some problems for this argument below.

Then, in section 2, I give an alternative account of how the categories apply to objects of possible experience, which depends on a key distinction between two types of transcendental condition. On the one hand, some of Kant's arguments conclude in what we can call "constitutive" transcendental conditions, conditions which must be met for a mental state of a

[12] As I note in the Introduction, objective reality is sometimes used interchangeably with "real possibility."

certain type to be a state of that type. On the other hand, some of his arguments conclude in "usability" or "use-relative" transcendental conditions, conditions which must obtain for a state of a certain type to be useful for, or function in, a cognitive task of another kind. In order for use-relative transcendental conditions on intuitions to hold *universally and necessarily*, we must further stipulate that the further cognitive task in question is one that the subject always has at her disposal.

Using this distinction, I argue that Kant's answer to the question how the categories apply to objects of experience depends heavily on the "Schematism" chapter. The schemata, I argue, are use-relative transcendental conditions on intuition, conditions which hold *insofar as* a subject can use intuition for the cognitive end of making determinate perceptual judgments about objective empirical times. This qualification entails that the conditions are universally and necessarily met in intuition for all and only those subjects with certain abilities, and of a certain level of cognitive sophistication. To claim that intuition must have a certain set of properties in order for it to be *useful* for a particular end is not yet to say that intuition *consists in* this set of properties. Because the conditions are use-relative and not constitutive, there could in principle be intuitions that do not stand under the categories and so cannot be used, e.g. perhaps for non-human animals or young children. Yet for fully developed cognitive subjects with well-functioning faculties, intuition universally and necessarily stands under the categories.

Section 1: Orthodox Conceptualism and Some Initial Challenges to it.

> The pure concepts of the understanding must, therefore, not be abstracted from the sensation of the senses, nor must those concepts express the receptivity of representations through sense; but they must to be sure, have their sources in the nature of the soul, though not insofar as they are produced by the object nor insofar as they bring forth the object itself…But whereby are these things given to us if not by the way in which they

> affect us? And if such intellectual representations rest upon our inner activity, **whence comes the agreement that they are to have with objects that, after all, are by no means produced by them**? (Letter to Marcus Herz, 1772, 118-19)

How the pure concepts of the understanding can be said to "agree" with or be correctly applied to objects of experience was in large part responsible for Kant's "silent" decade.[13] With Hume, Kant noticed that we cannot simply demonstratively point to instances of the categories (e.g. the necessary connection of causation) via what is given through sensation, or *directly* in intuition. Given this fact about our minds, and given that our minds are not archetypal intellects that create their objects the way God's might, the question how we can justifiably *apply* these pure *a priori* concepts to intuitable objects becomes pressing.

Orthodox Conceptualists have argued that any plausible reading of Kant's answer to this question involves showing that the categories are *necessary* conditions for perception (and its content), and, as such transcendental conditions, apply to objects. To put the point more generally, a condition's being necessary for perception is sufficient for taking that condition to obtain of objects in the world. For the Conceptualist, the categories apply to objects insofar as they are conditions for the perception of objects. Hannah Ginsborg describes the conceptualist line well:

> …The aim of the deduction is to show that the pure concepts have application to objects given to us in experience. And the idea that understanding is required for perceptual synthesis seems to be an essential part of achieving this aim.[14]

[13] The so-called "silent" decade fell between the *Inaugural Dissertation* (1770) and the publication of the A edition of the first *Critique* (1781). I use scare quotes to refer to the "silent" decade, because Kant was *not* actually professionally silent during this period. He had a couple of minor publications, including two versions of his essay *On the Different Races of Man*. It seems to be a strange and even politically problematic heuristic of Kant scholarship to refer to this as his silent decade, given that during it he published a work on race that would become famous for being so problematic.

[14] Ginsborg, (2008), p. 69.

Ginsborg also situates the Conceptualist reading of Kant's strategy in the Deduction in the context of Kant's answer to the Humean problem of how judgments of necessary causation can be justified, given that we never have sensory impressions of necessary connection and so do not derive the concept from experience. She writes,

> Kant's strategy in response [to Hume's problem]… is to claim that even though we have no sensory impression corresponding to the concept of causality, causality as necessary connexion nonetheless figures in the content of perception. It does so because perceptual content is arrived at through a synthesis of sensible impressions which accords with rules of the understanding.[15]

The general outline of the argument is that the categories apply to objects of perception insofar as the categories are rules for the *synthesis* of perception. So, we could not perceive at all if we did not possess and employ these concepts in the perceptual discrimination of objects, i.e. if perception were not antecedently synthesized through them. Synthesis, on this reading, is taken to precede any conscious perceptual state whatsoever.

One initial challenge for the Conceptualist is to spell out the nature of the "necessity" involved in the claim that the categories are *necessary* for perception. Conceptualist accounts often slide between claims about synthesis that suggest that the necessity involved is a kind of psychological necessity, and claims about the *nature* of content, and its constitutive conditions. It is not at all obvious that accounts of the former kind of necessity can be called upon in accounts of the latter kind.[16]

If the categories are *merely* psychologically necessary for perception, then Kant has made little headway in answering Hume's problem. Imagine a patient with synesthesia, who sees

[15] Ginsborg, (2008), p. 70.

[16] Robert Hanna attempts to offer an explanation of how the psychological genesis of cognition in "synthesis" can be integrated into Kant's views about logic. See Hanna, (2001), pp. 31-45. For the current purpose, I only aim to point out that sliding between the two types of explanations without any account of how they are related is problematic.

colors whenever she thinks about numbers. For this patient, these colors might come to help her reason mathematically. She may even come to rely on them in such a way that, were her synesthesia to be cured, she would have an extremely difficult time with mathematics. Although the color sensations have become psychologically indispensable to her subjective grasp of mathematics, no one would say that the colors in any way correctly represent, describe, or apply to, mathematics as such. Rather they are just something that this particular subject needs, psychologically speaking, to think using numbers, due to her unique subjective associations. Similarly, it will not suffice for the Conceptualist to claim simply that the categories are psychologically necessary for perception, even if they are necessary for all of us.

The Conceptualist's view, then, must hold that and explain how the categories are not merely psychologically necessary conditions on certain kinds of mental processing, but necessary in the stronger sense of being *constitutive* of perceptual content. The Conceptualist idea that perceptual content *as such* requires categorial structure depends on the view that certain relations hold between the categorial concepts (causation, substance, reality, etc.) and the very concept of an *object*. The argument goes roughly as follows: If what it means to be an object of experience consists in, for one example, having causal properties, then representing objects just is, or constitutively requires, representing causal properties. The categories are therefore indispensable concepts for representing objects. They, together with the concept of an object and the concept of a subject, constitute a kind of holism of related contents, all of which the subject must possess in order to possess any of them.

There is a straightforward systematic problem with this kind of view. It conflates necessary conditions for representing an object in *some* way with necessary conditions for representing the object *as being* a certain determinate way. It seems plausible that I can

represent an object without thereby already representing it as having determinate causal properties. To come to know these properties may be part of having a systematic view of the object *as objective*, but this seems like a more sophisticated achievement than merely *representing* an object.[17,18]

More importantly, the indispensable-concepts view raises a kind of textual puzzle. Contrast the notion of a category as an indispensable concept in with the idea of a *form of receptivity*. The reason we can know *a priori* that all objects that come before us in intuition will be spatiotemporal is that these are the *forms* of our receptivity, and are constitutive of *receptivity* itself. Qua constitutive forms they represent the only ways we can be affected by and receive information about objects. Objects could not be given to us *at all* were they not spatiotemporal. The reason a Transcendental Deduction is needed for the categories, by contrast, is that they, *unlike* the representations of space and time, are not conditions on an object's being given. In the transition to the Deduction, Kant describes the special problem that gives rise to the need for a transcendental deduction in the first place:

> The categories of the understanding, on the contrary, do not represent to us the conditions under which objects are given in intuition at all, hence objects can indeed appear to us without necessarily having to be related to functions of the understanding, and therefore without the understanding containing their *a priori* conditions. Thus a difficulty is revealed here that we did not encounter in the field of sensibility, namely how **subjective conditions of thinking** should have **objective validity,** i.e., yield conditions of the possibility of all cognition of objects; for appearances can certainly be given in intuition without functions of the understanding. (A89-90/B122)

[17] For an extensive discussion of this kind of error and its prevalence in work inspired by Kant, see Burge, (2010).

[18] It also, in contemporary Fregean terms, confuses the level of sense with the level of reference. We can represent an object that *is in fact* causal, without representing it *as* causal, which would require representing its particular causal properties. I can veridically perceive what looks like a jello mold without realizing that the object is actually made of translucent plastic and so does not have the property the jello would have of splattering when I drop it on the ground.

The pure concepts of the understanding pose a problem that necessitates a deduction precisely because they are *not* conditions on the intuition of objects, but rather are "subjective conditions of thinking." It would be strange if Kant's solution to the problem of the Deduction were merely to take back the initial observation that generates the need for a Deduction in the first place, namely the claim that the categories, unlike space and time, are in no way required for an object to be given to us. Kant continues,

> "…That objects of sensible intuition must accord with the formal conditions of sensibility that lie in the mind *a priori* is clear from the fact that otherwise they would not be objects for us; but that they must also accord with the conditions that the understanding requires for the synthetic unity of thinking is a conclusion that is not so easily seen. For appearances could after all be so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity, and everything would then lie in such confusion that, e.g., in the succession of appearances nothing would offer itself that would furnish a rule of synthesis and thus correspond to the concept of cause and effect, so that this concept would therefore be entirely empty, nugatory, and without significance. **Appearances would nonetheless offer objects to our intuition, for intuition by no means requires the functions of thinking**. (A90-1/B122-3, my emphasis)

The special challenge for the pure concepts is to explain how exactly *objects* must conform to the categories, even though the categories are not conditions on the intuition of objects.

One might think that, in this very passage, Kant is offering a kind of empirical test that shows that perception is categorial. The test would go as follows:

(1) *If* appearances *were* "so constituted that the understanding would not find them in accord with the conditions of its unity," *then* "everything would lie in such confusion."
(2) Things do not lie in confusion (obviously, from experience).
(3) So, appearances (or our perceptions of them) must be constituted in accord with the conditions of its unity, i.e. constitutively involve the categories.

The problem with reading the passage this way is that it utterly ignores the way the counterfactuals speak to the issue of the conditions on content. If intuition could in-principle offer objects to us even if the understanding could not come to cognize them through intuition, then intuition provides at least some independent content. Whether or not intuition is *actually*

structured in a way that is useful to the understanding thus is not the same question as what the structure of intuition *as such necessarily* consists in.

Conceptualists like Ginsborg are well aware of these passages. In fact, Ginsborg references them explicitly and suggests a way of reading them that is meant to deflate their non-conceptualist force. Although these passages *do* provide textual support for the Non-Conceptualist, insofar as they pose a puzzle for Conceptualist readings of the *need* for a Transcendental Deduction in the first place, they also suggest that there is something extremely peculiar about the Conceptualist's reading of the *strategy* of the Deduction. And this is the greater worry. If Kant's goal in the Deduction (and in the Analytic in general) is to show that the categories genuinely apply to objects of possible experience, then the strategy of showing that the categories are rules of the "spontaneous" synthesis required for perception does us little help. The claim on its own does not show that apprehended objects *have* the categorial properties ascribed to them by those concepts, so it does not show that the categories are, or even possibly can be, *true* of objects. Rather, in appealing to *spontaneity*, the claim might even suggest the opposite. As spontaneous rules, the categories could very well super-add contents that, while in some sense universal and necessary for human minds, are nevertheless *merely* fictional. The problem of the applicability of the categories to objects of experience cannot be solved by appeal to conditions on the subjective sources of cognition *qua* subjective sources. Kant must, therefore, give us reason to believe that *objects* conform to the categories and not just that our way of organizing perceptual information conforms to the categories.[19] We can see the problem more clearly by distinguishing two aspects of the applicability problem.

[19] You might think there are two distinct forms of conceptualism that this discussion is running together. You might think that a second form of Orthodox Conceptualism might endorse the weaker claim that the categories are necessary conditions only for the *thinking* in an "experience." But there are two ways that this claim can be meant, one which collapses into the first form of Orthodox Conceptualism outlined by Ginsborg, and one which is entirely

1.1: Two Aspects of the Applicability Problem

The aim of establishing the objective reality (or real possibility) of the categories is the aim of *showing that* and *how* their concepts apply to objects. As we saw above, *intuition* must be in some way called up to show that and how they do. In the case of the categories, establishing objective reality is difficult for two reasons. On the one hand, because the pure concepts are *a priori*, they are never encountered in the sensory matter of any experience, so the question how we can call on intuition to *know* that they refer to objects is mysterious. Call this the object problem. On the other hand, also because the concepts are *a priori*, they purport to hold in some sense universally and necessarily, so we must show how they do. Call this the necessity problem.

Orthodox Conceptualism has a prima facie answer to the necessity problem, at least in a qualified form. Conceptualism holds that the categories are "necessary" conditions for the synthesis of perception, and so "apply" in any instance of experience, insofar as experience just is "cognition through perceptions," (B219).[20] The Conceptualist's reply to the necessity problem

---

silent on the issue of the structure of *perceptual* content and is consistent with either the first form of Orthodox Conceptualism or with non-conceptualism. On the first way, "experience," is meant to be synonymous with perception, and so the categories are conditions on the *thinking* in any perception. So perception is conceptually structured by the categories, which are its necessary and constitutive conditions, as Ginsborg outlines. This just is the Orthodox Conceptualism under review. On the second way, "experience" is understood to be a higher level cognitive achievement, like empirical knowledge. Yet this position merely on its own is silent on the question about the structure of perceptual content. It is worth noting that this latter way of reading the term "experience" has been widely accepted since Karl Ameriks (1978) paper. See Ameriks, "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument," *Kant-Studien*, 69.1-4 (1978): 273-287. I think Kant believes that the categories are merely conditions on the thinking in empirical knowledge. The challenge then is to understand how Kant thinks that *this* role for the categories solves the object problem that he poses in the Transcendental Deduction. To put the challenge in Kant's terms, how do subjective conditions of thinking (which may very well solve the necessity problem) have objective validity (i.e. solve the object problem)?

[20] We will return to this phrase below when we consider some of the more difficult passages from the Transcendental Deduction. The fact that "experience" is "cognition through connected perceptions," is important given Kant's argument in sections 24 and 26 for the claim that all *synthesis*, through which even perception itself is possible, stands under the categories. As I understand these claims, the categories guide the synthesis of a certain kind of *determinate* perception *through which* cognition is possible.

is *qualified*, insofar as it lacks an answer to the object problem. If the categories are rules that the mind follows to organize perceptual information, then they do apply, universally, *as* a cognitive organizing system. Yet solving the necessity problem alone, in this qualified way, does not yet show that this categorial organization correctly describes, or is true of, any feature of the world.

It is important to note that this problem is as much a problem for Weak Non-Conceptualism as it is for Orthodox Conceptualism.[21] Weak Non-Conceptualism holds that some levels of synthesis apply constitutively to perception and some apply only at a higher level in judgment. One possible version of this view would hold that, what Kant calls the "figurative synthesis of imagination" and the "synthesis of apprehension" are constitutively involved in perception, while the "synthesis of recognition in a concept" does not. If we endorse this view, then the non-conceptuality of perceptual content should follow from the pre-conceptuality of the rules that govern the lower kinds of synthesis. Yet the object problem persists. No matter the nature of these rule-bound syntheses, the question remains whether they in any way *correctly represent* the objects their resulting representations purport to be about.[22] The fact that they are rules for organizing does not show that they are "really possible."

[21] In my earlier attempts to grapple with this aspect of Kant's view, I thought (along with Longuenesse and Pendelbury) that the schemata were pre-conceptual rules that the mind follows in the *original* intuition of time. I thought they must therefore be constitutive of intuition. Simultaneously, I raised the object problem (under another formulation) to Orthodox Conceptualism. After some time, I have been convinced that the object problem is just as much a problem for the view I endorsed then. Showing that the schemata are rules of synthesis for perception does not yet establish that the perceived *objects* have the properties in question.

[22] Having knowledge that we could demonstrate that a concept refers requires some appeal to the way intuition can be drawn on for the sake of that demonstration. This principle is a feature of Kant's minimal empiricism about theoretical knowledge. Simply showing that certain concepts are necessary features of *spontaneity* or necessary conditions for *understanding* is not a sufficient substitute for showing how intuition can be called upon to justify its application.

Perhaps the object problem just is a systematic objection to Kant and not to the Conceptualist and Weak Non-Conceptualist readings. One reason for thinking that Kant was aware of the issue, however, is the distinction he makes between a concept's possessing subjective universality and objective universality. There are other pure concepts that Kant believes are derived from features of human psychology that are universal and necessary. The "ideas of reason," for example, as regulative principles of the empirical use of reason, (the "soul," the "world", and "God") are special concepts the possession of which supposedly aids our empirical investigation of the universe and ourselves.[23] However, Kant certainly does not think that we can know that they hold of empirical objects – or any objects – the way we can know that the categories do. Rather, they hold of reason itself, as guiding principles of empirical science, which aims toward the ultimate end of systematic unity under one principle.[24] If Kant could not show that we can draw on intuition to know that the categories refer to objects, then there would be very little to distinguish them from ideas of reason in their regulative use, except the faculty to which they happen to belong.[25] Categories would be concepts the possession of which is required for the synthesis of perception, while ideas of reason would be concepts the possession of which is necessary for integrating and unifying our empirical judgments into a systematic whole. Both types of state would derive their legitimacy wholly from the needs of the human mind. The question then emerges, why methodologically privilege one set of concepts over another? Why is one set *more objective* than the other?

[23] By "world" Kant means the world as a whole. Kant thinks we cannot speculate about the world as a whole (its beginning, its limits) because such features are in principle unperceivable, or, more precisely, are not "connected with" perception in the relevant way.

[24] See, e.g., (A671-89/B699-717), for discussion of the regulative use of the ideas of reason.

[25] At times Kant also claims that the categories are distinguished by the way they are formed. Pure categories are "reflected," while ideas are merely inferred. However, to say that a concept is "reflected" in its formation is to say that it, in a certain respect, originates *with* experience (i.e., empirical knowledge). See, for example, (A310/B366).

The fact that Kant seems to describe the ideas of reason as merely subjectively universal suggests that he means to distinguish the way they apply from the way the categories, *as* objectively universal, apply. Kant may or may not ultimately have a satisfying response to the object problem, but he at least seems to think he has one. His account should at least purport to address it, but the Conceptualist reading blocks this possibility.

Kant also applies the distinction between subjective and objective validity in the *Critique of Judgment*. There he claims that judgments of beauty are supposed to hold "universally" for all subjects, while precisely *not* holding of the object as such. They are supposed to hold for everyone insofar as the experience of the "beautiful" object relates to every subject's faculties in the same way.[26] By way of illustration, imagine, for example, that we *all* have the form of synesthesia mentioned above. We all see the same colors when we think about numbers. All of our faculties respond in the same way. Yet the color experiences we all share are still merely subjectively universal. Judgments of beauty are merely "subjectively" valid, because they do not truly describe any feature of the object. Rather they express a harmonious relation that obtains among a subject's faculties in her perception of the object. It is difficult to make out how Kant means to distinguish the "subjective universality" of these judgments, from the "objective universality" of categorial judgments, if the Conceptualist answer to the object problem is Kant's real or only answer. Categorial judgments would really only apply to the (ideally) uniform way our minds organize perceptual experience, while judgments of beauty would really only apply to the (ideally) uniform way they respond to certain formal elements in perception. As with the ideas of reason, the question of the grounds for the priority of the categories in being applied to

[26] See *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, paragraph 8, (*Ak* 5:214- 5:216).

objects arises, if we cannot explain how intuition can be somehow called upon to show that objects possess the properties attributed to them by the categories.

Again, however, these points are all mere appeals to the consistency, or lack of consistency, of the text, which can only take us so far in the interpretive dimension of the history of philosophy. Perhaps the object problem just is a problem. Perhaps Kant is, in the end, only interested in elaborating the variety of subjective conditions of the various cognitive faculties.[27] But there seem to be further resources in the text that suggest that Kant was concerned to show that the categories and the "principles of nature" derived from them apply to objects and their relations and not merely to the subjective organization of our perception of them. These resources appear, however, in the chapter after the Transcendental Deduction proper, in the Schematism chapter. In the next section I offer a reading of the Schematism that I think helps Kant out of the object problem.

Section 2: Schematism

The Schematism chapter occupies a strange position in the argument of the Transcendental Analytic. It lies between the two most researched chapters in the *Critique*, the Transcendental Deduction of the Categories, and the System of Principles, which houses the infamous "Analogies of Experience." It is the first chapter of the Transcendental Doctrine of the power of Judgment (or Analytic of Principles), and persists relatively unchanged from the A through B editions.

[27] In fact Kant describes the nature of critique in a similar way in the First Introduction to the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. The reason Kant offers for the need for a critique of the power of judgment is architectonical, namely to systematically complete the critique of the subjective sources of cognition. See *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, (*Ak* 20:202).

In describing the chapter, Kant writes that it deals with "the sensible condition under which alone pure concepts of the understanding can be employed, i.e., with the schematism of the pure understanding…" (A136/B175). The chapter following the Schematism, the second chapter of the Analytic of Principles, subsequently deals with "those synthetic judgments that flow *a priori* from pure concepts of the understanding **under these conditions** and ground all other cognitions *a priori,* i.e., with the principles of pure understanding," (A136/B175, bold emphasis added). We know from these passages that the Schematism serves two important functions. From the latter, we know the chapter offers a constraint on which principles can be known *a priori.* From the former, we see that the Schematism outlines the *sensible* conditions that constitute this very constraint, and which make categorial judgment about objects possible.[28] Kant begins the Schematism by asking what he takes to be its main question, which is also the main question of the Transcendental Analytic and the question he raised to Herz nearly ten years prior. "…How," Kant asks, is the "**application** of the category to appearances possible, since no one would say that the category, e.g. causality, could also be intuited through the senses and is contained in the appearance?" (A137/B176). The Schematism chapter deals with the question how the categories can rightfully feature in knowledge claims about empirical objects, given that we do not immediately sense the relations and properties to which they refer, and given that intuition, or some connection with it, is the only way that we can come to know *that* concepts *do* refer to objects. Kant explains how intuition usually functions in empirical judgment,

> In all subsumptions of an object under a concept the representations of the former must be **homogeneous** with the latter, i.e., the concept must contain that which is represented in the object that is to be subsumed under it…. Thus the empirical concept of a **plate** has

[28] In chapter 3, I refer to a principle that I name Sense-Limits-Understanding, or SLU. SLU states that the epistemic reach of our synthetic *a priori* cognition is restricted to objects of possible experience. The Schematism chapter is crucial for establishing this principle, insofar as it outlines the only conditions, which are sensible in nature, in which the categories can be *legitimately* applied in the context of theoretical cognition.

> homogeneity with the pure geometrical concept of a **circle** for the roundness that is thought in the former can be intuited in the latter. (A137/B176)

A concept is homogeneous with another representation if it shares with that representation a predicate that represents some intuitable property. In constructing a circle *a priori* in space we imagine a certain property of roundness. The content of this *a priori* intuition is a predicate that corresponds to a predicate of roundness that is thus contained both in the geometrical concept of a circle and in the empirical concept of plate.[29] The sameness of predicate makes the two *concepts* homogeneous, but the *intuition*, through which subjects represent objects in a singular and immediate way, including the property of roundness, *demonstrates that* and *how* they are homogeneous, and justifies the judgment that connects them. "…The empirical concept of a plate has homogeneity with the geometrical concept of a circle, for the roundness *thought* in the former is *intuited* in the latter." In the case of a perfect circle, the roundness is *a priori* intuited, or imagined, while in the case of the empirical concept of a plate the roundness is thought. Yet in applying the concept "plate" to things in the world, the roundness of the object would be empirically intuited. The concept's homogeneity with the intuition itself makes *perceptual* judgments possible.[30]

The problem with the categories is that there is nothing *in* intuition, at least not in individual intuitions, that corresponds to the predicates contained in them. Kant writes,

---

[29] It is contained in the empirical concept of a round plate.

[30] This reading is inspired by Smit, (2000). Smit argues (I think decisively) that the immediacy criterion of intuition does not entail the claim that intuitions do not relate to (or refer to) their objects via "marks." This point seems to rule out the direct realism reading of Kant's views of perception along the lines that McLear is developing. Smit argues that Kant endorses a broadly Aristotelian view of cognition, according to which a *property* can have both "intentional and natural existence." (Smit, 249). Even if we grant that the *property*, in its intentional existence is literally present to the mind (which is not something I take up here), we must still distinguish the property's intentional existence from its natural existence, a distinction which McLear's read precludes. So, if Kant holds that the intuition must be homogeneous with the concept, and if homogeneity consists in the concept and intuition representing the same property through some shared predicate, then intuitions, according to Kant, definitely have content. See also fn. 40 above.

> Now pure concepts of the understanding, however, in comparison with empirical (indeed in general sensible) intuitions, are entirely unhomogeneous, and can never be encountered in any intuition. Now how is the **subsumption** of the latter under the former, thus the **application** of the category to appearances possible? (A137/B176)

We do not sense the properties of, for example, necessary connection between cause and effect, accident and inherence, or causal reciprocity. So intuition cannot be directly called on for a confirming instance of these concepts in the way someone like Hume might want. As we will see, however, although there are not confirming instances of categories, the Schematism explains how intuition can be called on in a different way to justify their application.

Kant gives a more precise formulation of the problem in the introduction to the Analytic of Principles. The Schematism chapter will answer the following question: (1) under what "conditions" can "objects *in harmony* with those [pure] concepts be *given*[?]" (A136/B175, my emphasis). This is a question specifically about what intuition must be like if it is to be called upon to demonstrate that and when *objects* "stand under" the categories. The second question is stated within the Schematism itself: (2) how are we *entitled* to *apply* the categories to given objects? (A138/B177, my emphasis) This is a question specifically about the way we actively use and are justified in using the categories in knowledge claims.

The distinction between questions (1) and (2) indicates that there are two sides to the Schematism chapter. Question (1) is about what perception and intuition must be like (only) if they are to establish, or justify, that there are categorial properties and relations. It approaches the question of justification from the bottom up. What conditions on perception must obtain if objects are to be *given* in conformity, or in *harmony*, with the categories?[31] Question (2) is about

[31] In case it is not yet obvious, I should mention that in categorial judgments about particular objects and events the categories refer to objects and events not to "intuitions," or, for that matter, perceptions. However, to show that the categories are objectively *real*, or *really* possible, Kant must show how the subject can draw on intuition in justifying application of the categories. That is, he must show *how* the categories justifiably apply to objects of *possible* experience. This is a constraint placed on the project by Kant's own minimal empiricism.

our ability to make use of the categories in judgment, and so approaches the question of justification from the top down. How, and in what way, do we cognitive subjects, apply the categories by making use of these perceptions? Which rules do we follow to recognize the conditions relevant for applying the concept?

As I think the Schematism should be read, the only way Kant can capture the normative element required by (2), the question how we are entitled to use the categories, is by first answering (1), the question what perception must be like if objects are to be given in harmony with the categories. The *way* objects are *given* in harmony with the categories explains how our perception of objects can have some justificatory role to play in establishing judgments that employ the categories.[32] The Schematism chapter outlines these several *ways,* but it also explains how these ways can serve the justificatory role they must.

Kant's concern with using intuition in the service of justifying the categories stems from the fact that the claims made by using the categories are claims of theoretical reason (and so not, for example, practical reason). Theoretical reason aims at what there really is in the world, and therefore requires conditions to be met that guarantee that this aim is being legitimately pursued. For this reason, establishing the objective reality of the categories, i.e. showing that they apply to objects *at all*, must involve some reference to receptivity, if only because receptivity puts us in touch with the world.

The gap between the category and intuitions, for Kant, must be filled by a "third thing," which, on one side, stands in homogeneity with the category and, on the other, with the

[32] In the "System of Principles," Kant argues for the universal metaphysical judgments that flow from the sensible conditions outlined in the "Schematism." However, the sensible conditions should be conditions for both metaphysical judgments involving the categories and empirical judgments involving the categories. Because even empirical causal judgments purport to hold universally and necessarily, we must be able to use them for everyday (and scientific) purposes. Here I assume that Kant is interested in giving sensible application conditions for *empirical* judgments involving categories and not merely the *a priori* judgments named in the principles.

appearance. This third thing Kant calls the schema. He illustrates and elaborates a general notion of schema in tandem with the idea of the particular type of "transcendental" schema required for a category. For ordinary concepts, a schema is a "representation of a general procedure of the imagination for providing a concept with its image," (A140/B180). Kant gives the example of counting.

> If I place five points in a row, ….. , this is an image of the number five. On the contrary, if I only think a number in general, which could be five or a hundred, this thinking is more the representation of *a method* for representing a multitude (e.g. a thousand) in accordance with a certain concept than the image itself…(A140/B179)

The concept of the number five can, Kant thinks, be brought to an image, by placing five points in a row. The concept of a number *in general*, (which is the schema for the quantitative categories), according to Kant, is a *procedure* for representing a multitude *in accordance* with this or that concept (whether five or a thousand). Through the schema of number a subject can generate *a priori* intuitions (or imagine) various multitudes, and also through that schema, the subject recognizes images as instances of particular number concepts. The procedure required for bringing this image of five points in a row under the concept "five" is counting, the successive addition of homogeneous units, or, in this case, points. I know there are five points on the page by counting them. I imagine five points by a similar procedure of setting points side-by-side in *a priori* (imagined) space. The schema of number, the representation of a multitude, contains the procedure of counting, i.e. for generating multitudes for particular number concept (whether five or a thousand). The schema, therefore, must be distinguished from both the image and the concept, insofar as it is a procedure for connecting the two.

There are two ways to "provide" a concept with its image. On the one hand, a subject can use a schema to *construct* an image *a priori* in imagination that corresponds to a concept, e.g., imagine five points in a row, or, for another example, a triangle. In constructing the *a priori*

intuition, the subject successively generates the image by following the procedure, e.g. by counting the points or drawing the figure in thought. On the other hand, she uses the same procedure in the *recognition* of instances of a concept "given" in an image, say, in judging that something is triangular, or that there are five points on the page. Similarly, for empirical concepts, e.g. "dog," she uses a rule for picking out a four-footed animal of a certain general physical organization, in order to recognize various and diverse instances of dogs.[33,34]

The schema, qua procedure, is a rule that the subject at some level grasps, or *understands*, in order to either generate *a priori* (i.e., imagine), or recognize instances of a concept.[35] Grasp of this rule contributes to the justification of mathematical or perceptual judgments involving these concepts. The categories, however, unlike pure sensible (mathematical) and empirical concepts, "can never be brought to an image at all," their schemata must work in different way.[36] In the case of the categories, the concepts are brought not to an

[33] I think it is useful to think of the schema as the rule that guides *observation*, i.e. a *looking* rather than a mere seeing, which involves concept-directed attention in the act of perception.

[34] Both of these uses for the schema are at play in geometry, for Kant. Although we *construct* geometric concept by imagining their intuitions *a priori*, we make further determinations about these figures by recognition of features of the *a priori* constructed figure. I construct a triangle by following the schema of a closed three-sided figure in Euclidian space, but then I come to know things about this figure, e.g. that its internal angle sum is 180 degrees, through a synthetic method of recognizing features of the *a priori* intuited figure. The schema, thus, has a dynamic function.

[35] Kant uses an example of an empirical concept, namely "dog," in his explanation of this process. But it seems that recognition would also be involved even in the case of synthetic *a priori* judgments made about *a priori* constructions of figures in space (as in geometry). While the subject constructs according to the schema, she then comes to make judgments on the basis of the rule that she just followed. To make judgments on the basis of this rule she must *grasp* or *recognize* that *this* is the rule that she followed. This seems to be an instance of recognition, and suggests that following the schema in the case of mathematical judgments is a dynamic process.

[36] There is a confusing passage in the Schematism in which Kant seems to claim that empirical and mathematical concepts *cannot* be brought to an image (A141/B180). The reason this passage is initially confusing is that Kant first distinguishes the category from other concepts by the fact that it cannot be brought to an image at all, *unlike* other concepts. I think this is just a confusion of style. Kant's point is that schemata are operative for all non-categorial recognitional concept application, in running between the concept and the image. The category, by contrast, is not brought to an image at all, not even by the schema.

image, but to a *synthesis* of *imagination* in accordance with the universal *form* of sensibility, namely time. He writes,

> Now it is clear that there must be a third thing, which must stand in homogeneity with the category on the one hand and the appearance on the other, and makes possible the application of the former to the latter. This mediating representation must be pure… and yet **intellectual** on the one hand and **sensible** on the other. Such a representation is the **transcendental schema**. (A138/B177)

The schemata of the categories, like other schemata, are rules that the subject grasps in order to recognize instances of the concepts. The difference is that the content she recognizes in applying the categories does not consist in sensation, or a sensory image, but rather in the *ways* images, or sensory contents are related, and then subsequently combined, or synthesized, for the sake of a certain cognitive end. Consider the case of *number* again. Number is the schema of the quantitative categories. The concept of "number," as a schema, includes a procedure for successively adding together homogeneous units, whether mathematical points, homogeneous spatial units, or homogeneous empirical objects, like marbles. If I perceive a bowl of marbles, there is a certain number of them in the bowl. I can determine the precise number, what Kant would call "the magnitude," and verify that there are exactly twenty-five, by the procedure contained in the number schema, namely counting. Although the general categories of magnitude (unity, plurality, totality) are not at all sufficiently represented in my original intuition of the bowl full of some indeterminate number of marbles, I can, nevertheless, determine *a* quantity through applying the schema of number, in counting the marbles. Counting the marbles, however, and applying the schema, occurs over time, and involves a synthesis of perception *according to this end*. It does not occur in the original single intuition of the bowl of marbles. I bring the quantitative categories to the intuition of the marbles through the procedure of counting contained in the schema of number.

The quantitative and qualitative categories are, what Kant calls, "mathematical" categories. "Mathematical categories" are special in that, in any given *individual* intuition, some indeterminate quantitative or qualitative properties will be represented. Yet I still need the synthesis of perception to determine the quantity or quality, or to represent them *determinately*. The "dynamical" categories, on the other hand, including the relations of substance-and-accident and cause-and-effect, are even further removed from the individual intuition. The schema for the category of substance is the "persistence of the real in time, i.e., the representation of the real as a substratum of empirical time-determination in general…" (A144/B183). It is perhaps obvious that we cannot perceive persistence in an instant or in a single intuition, and so cannot bring the concept of substance to an individual intuition. Persistence takes time and so the perception of persistence occurs over time as well. So perceiving persistence *at all* must involve a synthesis across intuitions. Nevertheless, just as, in the case of the categories of quantity, there were some properties given in intuition to which the synthesis and schema were applied, so must there be properties represented in given intuitions on which the syntheses for the dynamic categories can be applied. The relation of persistence can only be represented *across* intuitions, but there must be some content represented in the intuition on which this temporally extended synthesis can act. If the schema for substance is "the persistence of the real in time," the properties in question are those that we also represent *as real*. For Kant, they are those properties that are represented in a singular and direct way *in* intuition, namely those properties that correspond to our "sensations."

The schemata refer to precisely those properties that correspond to the predicates contained in the *empirical use* of the categories. If I observe that some thing *persists* from t_1 to t_2, my observation of this property is the way I come to represent a thing as a subject and not as a predicate of another thing, which is to say, as a substance. Persistence is the property in relation

to which other properties are represented in an object. Consider a simple example of a persisting object, say an orange. In my perception of the orange I represent its persistence through time. I also represent its persistence through change. I can peel it, dip it in chocolate, or pierce it with a tooth pick. I can also pick it up, roll it on the table, feel its weight as I carry it, or the texture of its skin. I can only represent these traits as inhering in, or as properties (or accidents) of, the orange if I also represent the orange's persistence. The properties that co-occur in the orange, say its texture and its spherical shape, can only be judged to co-occur on the basis of my perception of its persistence. The properties that succeed each other, say its initially spherical shape and its subsequently quite different shapes when I cut it and then squeeze it for its juice, also depend on my representation of the persistence of the orange.

On the basis of my representation of persistence, I am entitled to judge that, in my perception of the orange, there is a (material) substance. For Kant, it is characteristic of substances that they are represented as subjects and never as predicates. In making objective determinations about the orange, I judge, for example, "Oranges are spherical," because the persistence of the orange is a necessary condition on representing the properties inhering together in one object. I do not judge – at least not in making determinations of objective features of the world -- to use Kant's phrasing, "Something spherical is an orange."[37] It is by virtue of representing persistence that I can come to make determinate judgments of the categorical form. The perception of persistence indicates to the subject that there is a certain organization of things present, namely a body, which can and will undergo alterations through causal interaction.

[37] Of course, this sentence is grammatical. We can imagine a subject with a powerful olfactory sense that smells two pleasing fragrances, one citrus, the other vanilla. She might judge "Something that smells nice is an orange." Here we use the phrase "is an orange" as a predicate and not as the subject. But Kant is not making a point about surface grammar or language. It is a point about our capacity to make judgments about objects qua objective.

The transcendental schema, Kant says, is on the one hand "sensible" and on the other "intellectual," and is necessary not only for applying the categories, but also for making *determinate* temporal judgments. By "determinate temporal judgments," I mean judgments about the measurable and objective temporal relations that hold among events and objects.[38] The schemata of the categories are specifications of the rules that the mind must follow in making judgments of the kind, e.g. "x happened at t_1 and y happened at t_2," or "x occurred before y," or "x lasted from t_1 to t_2."[39] The schemata include a variety of predicates, including, e.g., *persistence*, *duration ("the quantity of something insofar as it fills time"* (A143/B183)*)*, *succession according to a rule*, and *number*. These, Kant thinks, are the properties that must be recognized in order to make *objective* time-determinations.

The schemata are necessary for time-determination, Kant thinks, because we do not directly perceive time "in itself." There is thus a question about how we make determinate and objective judgments about empirical times. How do we measure, e.g., the time from one noon until the next?[40] Kant's answer is that we use our representation of the persistence of things in the world (material substances like the sun and the earth), together with the schemata and categories of *quantity* to measure the alterations (e.g. the motions) of these persisting things in relation to one another.

Kant's thought is that we must use our perception of substances as a reference frame for tracking change (including motion). By determining these changes relative to substances, we

[38] These events and objects are "phenomena," or empirical objects. That is, they are objects that conform to the conditions for possible experience.

[39] Kant calls the schemata "*transcendental* time determinations," (A139/B178), because they are rules the mind must necessarily follow in determining time. Moreover, they are rules for picking out properties (represented through intuition) that, when synthesized across time, represent objective temporal properties.

[40] I say much more about the question of how perception of persistence underlies objective time-determinations in chapter 2, when I consider how Kant means to apply his claims in the First Analogy to the Refutation of Idealism.

can objectively determine empirical time. There is therefore a reciprocal conditioning of the representation of these primitive temporal properties referred to by the schemata and the representations of time. The schemata refer to the ways that things are intuited and subsequently recognized *in* time, and therefore *presuppose* the *perception* of temporal properties, and so the "appearance" of things *in* time. Subsequently, they are representations that the mind must be capable of having in order to make determinate and objective judgments about *empirical* times themselves.[41]

This reading of the Schematism puts us in a better position to understand how Kant means to solve the object problem of the applicability of the categories to experience, i.e. the question how these *a priori* concepts apply to *objects*. Time is a form of receptivity. Only insofar as objects appear to us in time can they appear to us at all. But, insofar as we subjects grasp the schemata of the categories, we can observe, seek out, and recognize the objective temporal relations that obtain among these things in and across their appearance to us. But we could not be said to really recognize these relations (as oppose to simply projecting them), if they were not already contained in the received data of experience, i.e. in the perceivable temporal relations among appearances, or objects of experience. So, insofar as the objects appear to us in the manifold temporal ways referred to by the schemata, and insofar as the subject grasps the rule for the procedure of time-determination, the categories apply to objects of experience.

Just as there are two sides to the Schematism chapter, there are also two sides to the schemata. The schemata are rules that the imagination follows in bringing unity to the synthesis of perception, in making determinate judgments about time. These rules tell the mind how to pick out the relevant relations. In whatever way we understand the nature of these rules, whether

[41] Because time is the form of inner sense, my subjective states *represented as such*, always appear to me in succession.

as concepts as the Conceptualist would have it, or as pre-conceptual as the Weak Non-Conceptualist would have it, they *also* refer to, or describe, certain properties that the subject must encounter and represent in and across intuition. This antecedent intuitional representation will be non-conceptual, insofar as it is antecedent to and a necessary condition on, the schematic procedure through which concepts are applied. These properties are relations in time and so require a temporally-extended perception to be apprehended. But this presupposes that the intuitions that are synthesized in that extended perception represent some information that is drawn on and recognized by the synthesis of perception. Although I must count the marbles to determine their quantity, I must, while counting, be intuiting marbles, which in fact constitute some or another quantity. If I am interrupted while counting and so stop at fifteen instead of twenty five, I have not determined the number of the marbles, but the intuitions I've drawn on up to this point have been properly used in the service of that end.

While the Strong Non-conceptualist reading has a clearer answer to the object problem, there is a challenge for the current solution to the applicability problem as it has been stated so far. How does it answer the *necessity* problem? If the schemata explain how the categories apply to objects so far as we *happen* to experience certain temporal relations, it shows only that they are really possible. Yet, as "*a priori* laws of nature," Kant also clearly thinks they apply *necessarily* to *all* objects. In the next section, I suggest a solution to the necessity problem that draws on a distinction between two types of transcendental condition.

2.1 Solving the Necessity Problem: Varieties of Transcendental Condition

Recall that the necessity problem is the question how the categories qua *a priori* metaphysical concepts can be known to hold *universally* and with *necessity*. To begin, note that

the necessity problem is not quite so challenging as it might at first seem. Kant thinks we can never know that these *a priori* concepts hold of things *in general*, of things "in themselves," or of things without qualification.[42] There might be things to which our minds simply have no access, and there might be other sorts of minds that can perceive or cognize them in other ways. Part of Kant's solution to the question how metaphysical concepts can be known to apply universally and necessarily to objects, given the possibility of other ways of knowing, is to restrict the domain of objects under consideration from things in general, to objects of possible experience, or appearances. We arrive at a distinction between conditions for the possibility of *things per se* and conditions for the possibility of things *qua* objects of possible experience. We can call the former conditions "transcendent," and the latter "transcendental."

But Kant's critical reflection does not stop there. He notices that experience, as a form of empirical knowledge, requires the use of two cognitive abilities, *intuition* through which physical objects affect us, and *thought*, through which our encounters with the world can be understood. Each of these mental tasks has *constitutive transcendental conditions*. The forms of space and time are constitutive conditions on intuition, and the logical forms of judgment are constitutive conditions on thought. As constitutive, they make these mental states instances of the state types they are.

The faculties also must stand in certain relations for the sake of cooperating to achieve certain cognitive ends. Certain conditions must be met for a type of mental state to be used in this cognitive cooperation. These properties can still be called *transcendental* conditions, because they are conditions on the possibility of something. But insofar as these conditions apply relative to some particular use that can be made of a mental state of a certain type towards

[42] In chapter 3, I say more about understanding things in themselves as things *in general* or without qualification.

some cognitive end, they are necessary conditions on that state type only relative to that end. We can call these "use-relative" transcendental conditions, or usability conditions. Use-relative transcendental conditions on a mental state are conditions that a state must meet in order be useful for, or function in, another kind of cognitive task.

The *schemata*, I argue, are usability conditions on the intuition of objects. They are not constitutive of intuition *per se*, but they must obtain *across* intuition insofar as we can make objective time determinations on the basis of perception. Perception, or more precisely, the synthesis of perception, *must* represent certain temporal relations among objects *in order for* certain determinate judgments about time to be made. If the schemata of the categories are necessary *for* empirical time-determination, then the categories will hold of all objects, the perception of which *can be used* in the determination of time. The fact that we must *assume* that all objects that come before us *can* be determined in time, however, means that the schemata are only necessary conditions in the use-relative qualified sense. While we know from the Aesthetic that all objects that come before us will be intuited *as temporal*, we do not thereby know that we can *determine*, or objectively judge, the temporal properties of all objects. Objective time-determination is a more sophisticated cognitive accomplishment than mere temporal perception. But if we *can* determine time by calling on perception, as, for example, *science* requires, then the schemata, and subsequently the categories, apply.

The assumption that we can determine time, while an assumption, is not that radical. Measuring the time from one event to another is a necessary part of our empirical investigation into the world and subsequent accumulation of empirical knowledge, or *experience*. We can therefore assume it, insofar as it is an unqualified necessary condition on the possibility of *systematic empirical knowledge*, a kind of achievement Kant never meant to call into question.

Consequently, neither the schemata nor the categories are *constitutive* of intuition. All cognitive subjects who are capable of genuine experience, or genuine empirical knowledge, will be able to observe these temporal properties by following the schematic procedures. But following these procedures is not necessary for intuitions to be the states that they are, or to have content. It is therefore possible that there could be less sophisticated minds, like the minds of non-human animals or human infants, which can enjoy intuitions but cannot yet make determinate temporal judgments.[43]

Applying the notion of a use-relative transcendental condition to the schemata sheds new light on both the necessity problem of the categories' application and the consistency of the text. If the schemata are use-relative conditions on intuition, then we can judge that all synthesis, including the synthesis of perception, stands under the categories (only) if we assume that all objects of perception are time-determinable. Because use of the schemata of the categories, the very rules that justify the application of the categories to objects, is necessary for time-determination, so far as time-determination is possible, the categories apply.[44] At the same time, however, the functions of thinking are in no way required for intuition *qua* intuition.

---

[43] There is evidence in the *Anthropology* that Kant thought that animals could have intuitions, in his discussion of "obscure representations" or representations that we enjoy without being conscious that we enjoy them. He writes, "When I am conscious of seeing a human being far from me in a meadow, even though I am not conscious of seeing his eyes, nose, mouth, etc., I properly conclude only that this thing is a human being. For if I wanted to maintain that I do not at all have the representation of him in my intuition because I am not conscious of perceiving these parts of his head…then I would also not be able to say that I see a human being, since the representation of the whole (of the head or of the human being) is composed of these partial ideas…The field of sensuous intuitions and sensations of which we are not conscious, even though we can undoubtedly conclude that we have them; that is, *obscure* representations in the human being (and thus also in animals), is immense." See, Kant, *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, Trans. Louden, Cambridge University Press, 2006, 135. For more on Kant on animal minds, see McLear, "Kant on Animal Consciousness," *Philosophers' Imprint*, 11 (2011): 1-16.

[44] Granted this does qualify the universality of the categories in a certain way. The categories do not apply to all objects that *possibly* can be intuited, where the modal in question is relative to any possible mind that has intuition at all. If they were, then they would be necessary for intuition full stop. The categories *do*, however, apply to all objects that *possibly* can be intuited *and used* for the end of time-determination, where the modal is relative to fully developed and functional human cognitive minds.

The notion of a usability condition together with its employment in the solution to the necessity problem also helps to fill in an important hole in traditional readings of the Schematism chapter. Traditional readings approach the question of the justification of the categories *merely* from the top-down. They ask "how are the categories justified?" without first asking how objects can be given in conformity with them. The schemata, then, are understood to be merely application conditions for the pure concept, i.e., rules a subject uses to recognize instances of concepts. In the case of the categories, as we just saw, the conditions are temporal properties like persistence or succession. Ralph Walker, for example, writes,

> The question for us [in the Schematism] is what empirical criteria we use; what the general empirical criteria are, given our modes of intuition, for the truth of hypothetical judgments, subject-predicate categoricals, and so on. These will be the schemata.[45]

While this view is to an extent *correct*, it is incomplete, insofar as it fails to answer the necessity problem. It is true that the schemata refer to application conditions for the categories. Yet we need the notion of the schemata as use-relative conditions on perception to explain how the categories apply universally and necessarily to *all* objects. Otherwise the schemata simply refer to conditions in sensibility that may or may not obtain. The traditional reading of the

[45] Walker, *Kant*, Routledge, 1999, 91. His claim here is a little misleading, insofar as it seems to conflate empirical criteria that we use to apply a concept with the truth conditions for judgments involving the concept. To claim that the empirically detectable, i.e. evidential, conditions that contribute to the justification of a judgment *also* constitute the *truth* conditions of the judgment is a substantive claim in need of defense (one that is unfortunately absent). Walker might still be entitled to use the term "truth," in this context, however, just in case he is referring to Kant's technical notion of "empirical truth." As far as I can tell, Kant seems to use the term empirical truth in a way that suggests he has in mind a certain kind of empirical coherence. While space prohibits a detailed inquiry into his views about empirical truth, the *Jäsche Logic* suggests a distinction between general "material" criteria for truth and "formal" criteria of truth. See (*Jäsche Logic*, 50-51). The first kind would be criteria on the agreement of a representation with its object, and so, Kant says, are impossible for us to discuss. The latter consist in the agreement of a representation with the formal conditions of knowledge. This distinction is likely relevant to understanding Kant's views about empirical truth. That said, as I argued in the Introduction, I think Kant's views about noumenal concepts prohibit any reading of his text that attributes to him the view that, what we are here calling empirical truth, which makes reference to mere application conditions, is constitutive of semantic content. Kant must leave room for noumenal concepts that might possibly refer, but for the reference of which we cannot in-principle offer theoretical justification conditions.

Schematism shows how the categories are really *possible*, but not how they hold as universal laws of nature.

One might think that we can use the traditional reading of the Schematism as a supplement to Orthodox Conceptualism. The former would solve the object problem, while the latter would solve the necessity problem. On such a view the Schematism would describe a wholly pre-conscious process. The schemata would not be rules that a *subject* follows, but rather rules that the unconscious mind follows in sorting through the unconscious sensory data needed to apply the category. The conscious-level perceptual experience would be universally categorially structured, and the categories would apply to objects, because they have been applied already to unconscious inputs from objects to sensibility.

The problem with this view is that it fails to explain how application of the categories to objects can be *justified*, because the categories are applied to objects outside of the domain of justification, or below the personal level. If the categories are applied through the schemata in an unconscious structuring of perceptual experience, the schemata are not *justification* conditions at all, and application of the category is neither justified, nor unjustified, by the temporal conditions named in the schemata. Rather they are merely triggered. At this pre-conscious level, the question of entitlement does not arise at all.

On the reading of the Schematism I offer, on the other hand, the temporal relations named in the schemata are consciously apprehended across a synthesis of intuitions. We use the schemata to recognize the relevant temporal properties, properties like persistence which hold across intuitions, and then make judgments on the *basis* of that recognition.

Historically, the best systematic motivation for Orthodox Conceptualism has been its answer to the applicability problem of the categories, but, as it turns out, the Orthodox

Conceptualist answer to that problem falls short. Nevertheless, the view has prima facie grounding in a number of passages, especially from the Transcendental Deduction. In the next section, I consider some of these passages.

Section 3: The Hard Passages

There are several interpretive issues that surround the question of Kant's views on the content of perception. In this section I will consider those passages that seem to be Conceptualism's best textual grounding, namely the particularly suggestive passages at B105 along with sections 15-16, 24, and 26 of the Transcendental Deduction. Consider, first, the passage at B105.

> The same function that gives unity to the different representations **in a judgment** also gives unity to the mere synthesis of different representations **in an intuition,** which expressed generally, is called the pure concept of the understanding. The same understanding, therefore, and indeed by means of the very same actions through which it brings the logical form of a judgment into concepts by means of the analytic unity, also brings a transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold in intuition in general on account of which they are called pure concepts of the understanding that pertain to objects *a priori*…

The "same function" that brings unity to judgments also brings unity to the synthesis of an intuition. The "same understanding," by means of the "very same actions" brings *both* a logical form into a concept by means of "analytical unity," and also a "transcendental content" into its representations via the "synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition." If the function that brings unity to judgments is the same as the function that brings unity to **intuitions**, if the logical form of a concept is brought about by the same faculty that brings transcendental content into perception, and if this faculty brings these unities through the very same actions, then it sounds very much like Kant thinks intuitions have the same structure as concepts.

However there are some subtleties in the passage that should not be overlooked. To start, the "very same actions" in question here must be judgments, because just above this passage, Kant tells us that *all* actions of the understanding can be traced back to judgment, (A69/B94). This relativizes the entire passage to the context of making judgments. So in making judgments the understanding brings the same unity to both concepts and intuitions. The understanding brings logical form to a concept and also a "transcendental content into its representations by means of the synthetic unity of the manifold of intuition in general." Although this passage suggests that in making judgments a transcendental content is brought to the organization of intuition, nothing about it suggests that intuition as such depends on such judgments. In fact, the "same actions" claim suggests the subject matter under discussion is not intuition *per se*, but rather the effect the understanding has *on* intuition *when* it directs perception, observation, or attention, *for the sake of* judgments.[46]

In observing an event, say in a lab, the subject's attention is directed towards events that she expects will unfold according to certain regular and predictable relations. She *looks* expecting to *see.* In making an empirical prediction, "The strip will turn black when dropped into the acid," the subject both judges as much and also directs her attention to the objects in the world in a certain way. This direction and structuring of her *looking* synthesizes the intuitions, what she sees, in a certain way. However, the content of what she sees is not (at least not entirely) determined by the way the understanding guides her *looking*. She must also *see*. The "transcendental content" brought by the understanding to an intuition in a perceptual judgment can be read as the way the structure of attention is informed by the expectations involved in

[46] For a similar reading of this passage, see Hanna, (2006), 98.

observation. But the subject's expectations can still be unfulfilled. When she looks, she may find that the strip does not turn black.[47]

Second, it is important to note the context of B105. The passage occurs in the Metaphysical Deduction, where Kant attempts to use the table of judgments as a "guiding thread" or "clue" to the table of categories. Many commentators have criticized Kant for suggesting that this is a sufficient technique for ensuring the "completeness" and "systematicity" of the table of categories. At the start of the paragraph directly following the difficult passage in question, Kant writes, "In such a way there arise exactly as many pure concepts of the understanding…as there were logical functions of all possible judgments," (A79/B105), and then provides the table of the forms of judgment. Thus we should infer that Kant is trying to explain exactly *why* he is entitled to look at the forms of judgment as a clue to the categories. We can use the forms of judgment to derive the categories, precisely because the categories structure intuition in the context of perceptual, observational judgment. When we engage in judgment, according to Kant, the forms of judgment bring a unity to our thought. When we make empirical judgments on the basis of perception, we bring a categorial unity to the intuitions to which we appeal for the sake of justifying this judgment. "Synthesizing" the intuition under the catorial "unity" is required for coming to use the intuition as a *ground* for the judgment.

The next set of hard passages occurs in the Transcendental Deduction itself. In Section 15 of the B Deduction Kant returns to the idea of synthesis that he introduces in the Metaphysical Deduction. He claims that "all combination," whether of thought, or of pure or sensible intuition, is due to the "unitary action" of the spontaneity of the *understanding*. His

[47] Although Kant does not give an example like this, his example (B162) of *making* the intuition of a house into a perception is similar. In synthesizing intuitions into a perception of the house, I bring certain expectations to the table about the unity of space and perhaps about objects like houses. It could happen however, that when I walk behind the house, it is not a house at all, but the mere façade of one.

reason is, "…The combination of a manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and therefore cannot be already contained in the pure form of intuition," (B130). So whether we are talking about the combination of the manifold *in an intuition* or the combination of concepts in a judgment, all synthesis is an act of spontaneity, a property which Kant attributes to the *discursivity* of the understanding and its effect on the imagination.[48]

Because the various versions of Weak Non-conceptualism attempt to divide the syntheses into two groups, some of which belong to imagination *qua* synthesis in sensibility and some of which belong to the understanding proper, section 15 poses a special challenge to them. On that view, the former syntheses are viewed as pre-conceptual processing, while the latter are viewed as concept-directed. Insofar as section 15 seems to attribute *all* combination, qua spontaneous, to the faculty of the understanding, it puts Weak Non-Conceptualism in a difficult interpretive position.[49]

[48] Kant connects spontaneity with discursivity in the Metaphysical Deduction. Insofar as human minds are finite, we must think discursively, by sorting information under concepts. Our minds require universals to sort information, i.e. to hold it together in a way that our limited minds can grasp and use toward the end of knowledge. Moreover, cognition, or knowledge, requires this discursive activity. Our minds cognize things through concepts, which are partial representations of things. Representations must be "gone through, taken up, and combined in a certain way in order for a cognition to be made out of it." As a contrast class, we can conceive that God's mind might be *intuitive* rather than discursive. It would represent everything in its particularity all at once and would have no need of conceptual sorting, would make no use of partial representations as grounds of cognition, and so would have no need for the kind of synthesis our minds require. If God's mind synthesizes, it synthesizes in a very different way, and it creates through this synthesis insofar as it is archetypal. (This is all by way of clarification – Kant does not think we can have theoretical knowledge of God's existence, or even of his possibility, let alone of the nature of his mind.)

[49] There is a further question whether all of the understanding's contributions are *robustly* conceptual. See Longuenesse, (2005) for the view that the rules that the understanding provides for imagination to follow in the synthesis of perception are *pre*-discursive. Nothing I've said here rules this point out, so long as we also admit that there can be contentful intuition prior to even the type of pre-discursive synthesis embraced by people like Longuenesse. My suggestion is just that certain temporal relations must be represented in the content of intuition prior to the synthesis that runs through that content and forms a *determinate* representation on the basis of it. Perceptually representing relations through time itself takes time and must occur across a series of intuitions. But intuitions have contents that antecedently represent the properties of things (e.g. their persistence) which can only be grasped *as such* by applying the schema.

The Orthodox Conceptualist reading also finds prima facie grounding in this section's claims about the relation between "synthesis" and the "unity of synthesis." Synthesis, the combination of representations, requires a "unity," towards which it aims, or under which it organizes, information. Neither we, nor our unconscious minds, just combine things willy-nilly. In section 15, Kant says that this unity, "precedes all concepts of combination *a priori*," and so must be found "some place higher." This unity, he then claims in section 16, must be the "pure" or "original apperception," the unity of self-consciousness, which is expressed in the thought "I think."

For our purposes, these claims cannot be read in isolation. Kant thinks that all synthesis stands in a necessary relation to the unity of apperception. If it did not, Kant says, it would be "as much as to say that the representation would either be impossible or else at least would be nothing for me." (B132). Exploring the doctrine of apperception would take us far off course, but it is important to note that Kant thinks that the identity of the thinker, or the mental agent, is a condition on thought as such.[50] The question for our purposes is whether the *effect* of the understanding on intuition is *constitutive* of intuition's content *in an exhaustive way*.[51] If intuition and its spatio-temporal forms contribute any non-conceptual content to intuition, then it is not.

We can start to answer this question by appeal to section 16, where Kant argues that the *capacity* for a representation to be apperceived by a subject, i.e., to become a self-conscious

[50] For Kant the particular structure of that unity, for the kinds of thinkers we are, is the unity required for knowledge by experience. The categories are concepts the application of which in judgment distinguishes the knower from the known, i.e. the subject from the object. I say more about this in chapter 2.

[51] Hanna, (2005) expresses this point in a helpful way. There he argues that very question of non-conceptual content is *not* about whether perception is *at all* conceptually penetrated but whether there is any ingredient in perception that has its own non-conceptual structure.

representation, is just what it means for a representation "to belong to me." In section 17, Kant writes,

> The synthetic unity of consciousness is therefore an objective condition of cognition, not merely something I myself need in order to cognize an object but rather something under which every intuition must stand *in order to become an object for me*. (B138)

On one reading of this passage, Kant seems to say that in order for intuition to represent an object at all it must stand together in a synthetic unity of consciousness. Kant claims that the "unity of consciousness is that which alone constitutes the relation of representations to an object, thus their objective validity," (B137). This passage might suggest that Kant thinks that *reference per se* requires the synthetic unity of consciousness.[52]

Yet we should note that the passage from B137 continues, "…and consequently [the synthetic unity of consciousness] is that which makes them [**representations**] into *cognitions*…" This suggests that the synthetic unity of consciousness is a condition on the *use* of representations *for* cognition. They are conditions that are met universally and necessarily insofar as a representation can be used for the *cognition of objects as such*. In light of the distinction between use-relative transcendental conditions and constitutive transcendental conditions outlined above, we have good reason to ask what kind of argument is being given in these passages. Is Kant arguing that *representation* constitutively requires the synthetic unity of consciousness? Or is he arguing that for a representation to be used for *cognizing an object* it must "stand under" the synthetic unity of consciousness, just as it must "stand under" the categories?

[52] It might also seem to suggest that the unity of consciousness solves the object problem on its own, by relating a representation, e.g. a category, to an object. It is clearly a necessary condition for solving the object problem. That is the consciousness that enjoys the perception must be the same one that uses that perception to justify the empirical judgment. So it is necessary, but not sufficient.

We can look to section 19 for some help. There Kant claims that a judgment is "nothing other than the way to bring given cognitions to the **objective** unity of apperception. *That* [i.e. the bringing of given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception] is the aim of the copula ***is*** in them: [namely] to distinguish the subjective unity of given representations from the objective," (B141-2, my italics). The aim of the copula in categorical *judgments*, the aim of predication through the use of the word "is" *in* an objective determination, is to *distinguish* the objective aspects of appearance from the subjective.

Then, of course, in 20, Kant reveals that the categories are the functions for judging that bring representations to the objective unity of consciousness. Details aside, these passages suggest that, by *object*, Kant means *object represented as such*, or represented *as objective*. If the categories function to distinguish the objective order of things from the subjective, then the subject must possess at least some primitive notions of objectivity and subjectivity in employing them. While the categories are required for distinguishing the objective from the subjective, this type of determination seems to be a different and more cognitively sophisticated task than is require for a state's being *merely* representational, merely having semantic content, or merely presenting an appearance to us. Moreover, determination *of the representation* seems to presuppose that the contents being determined are *antecedently*, if as yet indeterminately, represented.

We find further evidence in Kant's elaboration about the copula of categorical judgment. The copula, **is,** designates a "necessary unity," (B142). He uses the example, "Bodies are heavy." He writes,

> By that, to be sure, I do not mean to say that these representations [i.e. "bodies" and "being heavy"] **necessarily** belong **to one another** *in the empirical intuition*, but rather that they belong to one another **in virtue of**, i.e., in accordance with principles of the

> objective determination of all representations *insofar as cognition can come from them*… (B142, original bold type, my italics)

In this passage, Kant is concerned with the special relation that obtains among perceptions *by virtue of* a subject's engagement in *judgments* about *objectivity*. They are relations that may hold of perceptions universally and necessarily "in virtue of, i.e., in accordance with principles of the objective determination of representation "insofar as cognition can come from them." He contrasts the idea of the two representations belonging together in this cognition-relative way with the idea that they *necessarily* belong together *in the empirical intuition*.[53] This suggests that the empirical intuition does not depend in a constitutive way on this type of belonging together, or synthesis. Rather synthesis *determines* the intuition, i.e. makes the intuition into a *determinate* representation, or cognition, of an object.

To recapitulate, Kant's claims in these passages include the following: (i) intuitions must stand in a *necessary relation* to the unity of apperception *in order to be anything for me*, i.e. *thinkable*. (ii) Categorial judgments distinguish the objective order of things from the merely subjective, and so bring intuitions to the unity of apperception in a particular and organized way, one which distinguishes things outside of me from things merely in me, i.e. the determinate and objective from the merely apparent and subjective.[54] The relations that hold between these mental states are not constitutive conditions. Rather, they are *use* relations. Nevertheless, as use-relative transcendental conditions, they are universal and necessary use relations.

[53] Although they do not *necessarily* belong together, and so are not determined in the original intuition, the heaviness of a body can be represented across intuitions, as the application condition for the judgment "The body is heavy." Kant's point is that, a synthesis of the concept of heaviness with the concept of a body is required for, *i.e.* necessary *for*, making this judgment.

[54] I say more about this distinction in chapter 2, in discussing how Kant means to demonstrate the existence of things *outside of me* in space.

Section 24 is the next seemingly problematic passage. It introduces the distinction between the *figurative* synthesis and intellectual synthesis. Figurative synthesis is a "synthesis of the manifold of *sensible* intuition," (B151, my emphasis). It is a certain organization that must be effected in perceptual experience, experience by minds with spatiotemporal forms of receptivity. *Intellectual* synthesis is a synthesis "which would be thought in the mere category in regard to the manifold of an intuition in general," (B151). It is an organization described at a level of abstraction that would hold of any kind of intuition, whether sensible or not. The passage begins with the claim that the Deduction up to this point has argued only that the categories are necessary conditions for cognition through *concepts*, irrespective of the nature of the sensibility through which they are related to objects. They have thus been conceived only as features of intellectual synthesis. For the categories to acquire "objective reality," or, "application to objects that can be given to us in intuition," we must understand how the intuitions of our particular sensible kind are necessarily, or necessarily can be, "unified" or organized in accordance with the categories. Kant posits the figurative synthesis, which he also calls the transcendental synthesis of the imagination, to fill this gap.[55]

All of this is consistent with the reading I have been offering. The possible tension arises with a certain reading of Kant's claim that the *figurative* synthesis of imagination is also "*productive*." He writes,

> Now insofar as the imagination is spontaneity, I also occasionally call it the **productive** imagination, and thereby distinguish it from the reproductive imagination, whose synthesis is subject solely to empirical laws, namely those of association. (B152)

[55] For the sake of understanding how Kant thought the objective reality of the categories could be established, it is extremely important to note that even though Kant took himself to have *already* shown that all discursive minds must use the categories, he *still* thinks he has to show that the categories apply to the spatiotemporal objects that our human forms of sensibility can intuit. Of course human minds fall into the set of discursive minds, so Kant takes himself to have already shown that they are necessary and universal features of our minds. But the Deduction continues, so we should ask "Why?" It seems that Kant thinks that he must show that and how they apply *via intuition* to objects, and not just that they must be used in thought.

The idea that synthesis is *productive* might seem to suggest that imagination *produces* intuition, and perhaps is therefore *constitutive* of perceptual content. But it is interesting and instructive that Kant uses all and only *a priori constructions* as examples of synthesis of the imagination. He writes,

> We cannot think of a line without **drawing** it in thought, we cannot think of a circle without **describing** it, we cannot represent the three dimensions of space at all without **placing** three lines perpendicular to each other at the same point, and we cannot even represent time without, in **drawing** a straight line,… attending merely to the action of the synthesis of the manifold through which we successively determine the inner sense. (B155)

These are all examples of ways that we represent figures in space and time by actively constructing figures in imagination. The procedures are followed in a way that is both *active* and *creative*. Kant thinks that these same procedures are in *some* way followed in making empirical determinations of the world, which, in its most determinate form (i.e. natural science), involves applying mathematics to the empirical. The question is how to understand the precise way that these procedures are followed. Does the mind *create* the content that it empirically determines? If it does, does its creative contribution alone *exhaustively structure* the content? If, as Kant claims, "The understanding… does not **find** some sort of combination of the manifold already in inner sense, but **produces** it, by **affecting** inner sense," (B155) is there no representational content that is independent of this affection?

There is a footnote at the end of the section that suggests one way in which the synthesis of imagination operates as an affection of the understanding on inner sense. Kant writes,

> I do not see how one can find so many difficulties in the fact that inner sense is affected by ourselves. Every act of **attention** can give us an example of this. In such acts the understanding always determines the inner sense, in accordance with the combination that it thinks, to the inner intuition that corresponds to the manifold in the synthesis of the understanding. (fn B156)

Actions of attention are personal level cognitive acts.[56] By attending the *understanding* "determines inner sense …*to* the inner intuition that corresponds to the manifold in the synthesis of the understanding." The understanding's effect on the inner sense in an act of attention is *to guide* it to the relevant "inner intuition" that "corresponds to the synthesis of the understanding." In attention's being concept-directed, we are able to pick out from a manifold array of conscious states and make focused use of the relevant contents. This picking-out and bringing-into-relief of a particular property or set of properties *productively imposes* a structure into perception that was not antecedently there. This structure makes a difference to what information will be "reproduced" in Kant's sense, or held in working memory. It also affects the position a subject is in to notice things about those aspects of her conscious life that are now on the periphery of her awareness. Attention is Kant's own straightforward example of the claim that understanding does not *find* some combination already in inner sense, but **produces** it, by **affecting** inner sense, (B155). While certain *relations* must already obtain in the data of experience, the understanding, through actions like attention, produces a *combination* by *noticing* or representing those relations *as* combinations. These cognitive actions are not required for intuition as such, but, according to Kant, are necessary for *determining* intuitions, in such a way that they can then be called upon to justify empirical judgments. But to *determine* an intuition, e.g. through attention, presupposes that there are at least some indeterminate representational options to begin with.[57] I could be attending to the keyboard as I type these words – they are represented in my conscious awareness, but instead I attend to the words on the screen. I could also attend to the feeling of

[56] By appealing to actions of attention, I mean to leave open the possibility that attention can be passively drawn, as, for example, by the sudden ringing of a bell. Whether Kant would count the passive cases as cases of attention is a question for another time.

[57] It seems like Kant thinks that all attention is only ever an act of the understanding. While nothing turns on this for the current argument, it might be a place to put pressure on his view. See the footnote to (B156) for Kant's claim that in *every* act of attention the understanding affects inner sense.

my feet on the floor, but I do not, yet that feeling is represented, if indeterminately, nevertheless. Yet these are all options for possible attention, because they are antecedently given representations.[58]

Section 26 is the final section of the B Deduction and the last hard passage we will consider here. It contains a number of claims that have served as grist for the Conceptualist mill, including the claim with which we began that, "…All synthesis, through which even perception itself **becomes possible,** stands under the categories…" (B161, my bold type). In this section, Kant argues that the synthesis of apprehension (the synthesis through which perception is possible) must agree with, or stand under, the categories. If the synthesis of apprehension agrees with the categories, then perception itself has, minimally, a structure that corresponds to the categories. The Orthodox Conceptualist reads this section as suggesting that the categories are conditions on the possibility of perception, and as such, conditions on all representational content. If this is all Kant has to say about how the categories apply to objects, then the object problem is also a problem for *him*.

To begin, we should note that the argument that the categories apply to the synthesis of apprehension turns on the distinction between the spatial-temporal *forms* of intuition on the one hand, and the *intuitions of* space and time on the other.[59] In a footnote to this point, Kant writes,

[58] Again, see the footnote to (B156) for Kant's appeal to attention as an example of the way the understanding "determines" the inner sense.

[59] In the much-discussed footnote to (B161), Kant distinguishes the form of intuition, which only gives a manifold, from the formal intuition, which gives the unity of the manifold. The unity of the formal intuition makes space representable as an *object*. Kant's idea is that insofar as geometry (or metaphysics) is really describing space, it is not merely representing things *as spatial*, but comprehending everything given under one single representation of space – an infinite expanse – which is both *a priori* and intuitive. This idea is familiar to us from the Schematism. Insofar as we can assume that we can *determine* everything in a singular space and time, and insofar as the synthesis of apprehension of *this* one comprehending intuition conforms with the categories, everything that comes before our senses will conform to the categories.

> Space, represented as **object** (as is really required in geometry), contains more than the mere form of intuition, namely the **comprehension** of the manifold given in accordance with the form of sensibility in an **intuitive** representation… (fn B160)

In geometry, we represent determinate spaces by constructing figures *a priori* in imagination. These determinate regions of space have *boundaries* set by the figures we imagine in them. We thus represent the figure spatially, in accordance with the form of intuition, but by representing the figure we also have a determinate intuition of the bounded region of space it occupies. To imagine a particular region of space within certain boundaries is to represent it under a certain *unity* of that region. Imagining the spatial unity of that region is going to depend in part on the concepts employed in the intention to imagine.

The case of geometry, however, does not speak either way to the question of *empirical* perceptual content. *A priori* imagination in geometry is clearly, at least in part, concept-directed. I cannot *construct* a triangle *a priori* without possessing some minimal concepts (line, three-sided, etc.) and imagining instances of them.[60] The more important and more seemingly problematic point for our purposes is the idea that the synthesis of *empirical* perceptions in apprehension –at whichever level it is effected – follows the very same procedure that is followed when we imagine figures in space *a priori*. If the procedure required for imagining things in space is the very same one that is necessary for having any intuitive representational content *at all*, then this passage seems like evidence for the Conceptualist reading. There are a couple of points to note.

First, let us grant that you have to have some concepts in order to imagine geometric figures in an *a priori* space. Nevertheless if intuition did not represent some content other than the contents guided by these concepts, then this intuition could never serve as the "third thing"

[60] This is not to say that every aspect of the imagined representation will be concept-directed. The point is just that possession of some concepts is (obviously) required to do geometry.

required to make new synthetic judgments. The intuition must both be homogenous with those original concepts and with the new *synthetic* concepts I arrive at through the synthetic *a priori* science of geometry. It is because intuition has its own content that it can serve as the third thing for new judgments. If the contents of the imagined figures were just the same as the contents of the concepts we appealed to in intending to imagine, then how could the judgments I make on the basis of my intuitions be *synthetic*? It would be as if they were made on the basis of concepts alone.

Second, there is reason to think that Kant's claim about the synthesis of apprehension and its relation to its unity is *relative* to the use that can be made of intuition for empirical cognition. Kant gives examples of how the synthesis of apprehension in the empirical cases is in agreement with the categories. He writes,

> …If, e.g., I make the empirical intuition of a house into perception through apprehension of its manifold, my ground is the **necessary unity** of space and of outer sensible intuition in general, and I as it were draw its shape in agreement with this synthetic unity of the manifold in space. This very same synthetic unity, however, if I abstract from the form of space, has its seat in the understanding, and is the category of the synthesis of the homogenous in an intuition in general, i.e., the category of **quantity**, with which that synthesis of apprehension, i.e., the perception, must therefore be in thoroughgoing agreement. (B162)

This passage has a number of difficult and important elements. Roughly, however, Kant's point is that in apprehending an object, here a house, the subject must "draw its shape" in accordance with a certain "necessary unity of space." But there is a key difference between an Orthodox Conceptualist and Strong Non-Conceptualist reading of just how the synthesis of apprehension *makes* an intuition into a perception.

According to the Conceptualist, the category of quantity directs the subject's very intuition of the house. That is, there is no representation at all prior to the synthesis of apprehension, which is directed by the category of quantity. Moreover, the procedure followed

in the empirical synthesis of perception is the very same procedure followed in the synthesis of imagined figures in geometry. I imagine a triangle by successively combining a homogenous region of space according to the concept of quantity. For the Conceptualist, I empirically *intuit* a triangular thing by doing the same thing. The "necessary unity of space," just is the concept of quantity that directs the synthesis of apprehension.

On the Strong Non-Conceptualist reading, however, the distinction between "intuition" and (what Kant is here calling) "perception" should be emphasized. In this case the necessary unity of the space, i.e. the shape, is made *necessary* by the appearance of the house in a certain region of my visual field. The *necessity* of apprehending *just this determinate space* rather than another, is a matter of there being a house in just this space and not another, and my *intuiting* a house in this space and not another. *Unlike* the case of geometry, my imagination does not *make it the case* that the figure occupies the space, but rather the intuited presence – and persistence in time – of a real thing *constrains* the way my mind can possibly apprehend just this particular space. It is because intuition puts us in touch with the *reality of things* that this constraint obtains.

The aspect of the apprehension that holds in both the empirical and geometric cases, therefore, is *not* the *production* of the representation of the figure in the content of the image, but rather the way the mind comprehends the unity of the figure *as* a figure.

The act of "making an intuition into a perception" can occur in a perceptual *judgment*, and is itself a quasi-judgmental activity. The relations that make the house occupy the space it occupies, however, are antecedently intuited over a series of intuitions, and then cognized *as combinations* only when the relevant organizing procedure is followed.

In apprehending a unity, the mind requires a successive addition of the homogeneous in a space. This procedure of successively adding together homogeneous units holds both in geometry and in the empirical apprehension of an object. The difference is that, in the empirical case the properties that are successively combined together must be *given* in the sensory image by the intuited presence of the house in space.

The Conceptualist must interpret the empirical "intuition" in this passage as either unconscious or non-representational and "perception" as the conscious-level and conceptual representational product of synthesis.[61] But if this is right, how should we understand Kant's appeal to an example at all? How can Kant even attempt to persuade the reader by example that *we make* an unconscious or non-representational intuition of a house *into* a conscious or representational perception?[62] Is he merely sliding between the personal and sub-personal levels? While the actions of a subject certainly affect her unconscious mental life, it is in-principle impossible to appeal to a conscious-level example as an illustration of this. The example has a phenomenological function in the argument, insofar as the reader can imagine herself attending to a house in a similar way, noticing the nature of the activities she is engaged in, and then recognizing that the rule she is following corresponds to the *schema* for the category of quantity. Thus the example really cannot be a description of an unconscious mental process.

Moreover, the Strong Non-Conceptualist reading of this passage makes clear how the categories can be said to apply to *objects* while the Conceptualist reading does not. On the

[61] Lorne Falkenstein holds this view. See Falkenstein, *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic*, University of Toronto Press, 2004.

[62] One way we might make non-representational states into representational ones, a way which is *clearly not* Kant's way, is by convention. If a community agrees about what some in-themselves non-representational marks (e.g. written marks on a page) will be taken to signify, then this agreement transforms these marks into representational signifiers. But this is not even in the ball park of what Kant is up to. In fact he suggests that the combination of "words" with meanings is arbitrary (B140). Here Kant is concerned with necessity.

Conceptualist reading, we explain how the category of quantity applies, by noticing how the synthesis of the perception of the house proceeds according to a similar rule. Roughly, on that view, I am justified in making judgments that apply the categories of quantity precisely because those very categories have already been applied in perception. But notice that this results in a kind of error theory of categorial judgment. When I judge, "The house is a nearly perfect cube," it certainly seems to me that I'm talking about a thing in the world, and not about the way my mind organizes perceptual information. Strictly speaking, however, on the Conceptualist reading, the categories apply in judgment *because* the categories structure perceptual experience. So while the judgments purport to be about things, they are really only true of the way our minds organize our representations of things. Thus, again, the object problem arises, if we don't give an account of how the way we are affected by objects contributes to the justification of the categories.

The Strong Non-Conceptualist reading, on the other hand, appeals to the properties of the house, which are represented in the empirical intuition, to explain how the mind successively adds together just these properties in representing the house as occupying a determinate region of space. The fact that the properties represented in intuition are the result of the *affection* of the house on our sense organs explains how we can subsequently successively add them together in perceptually *attending* to them. Moreover, it contributes to an explanation of how attending to them can come to justify judgments about the *object*, and not merely about our perceptual faculties.

On the Non-Conceptualist reading, we should read perception as "purposeful intuition," and "intuition," as pre-conceptual, yet still representational, perceptual experience (in our less robust contemporary sense). On this reading of the Deduction, we do not have to ignore the

problem that gave rise for the need of a Deduction in the first place. Intuitions *per se* in no way require the functions for thinking. Rather, the categories, or their schemata, are rules that guide *purposeful* intuition when we *determine* an object, or make judgments about an object *as objective.*

While I do not believe that these passages, taken in isolation, clearly favor one reading over the other, I take myself to have shown that they are at least consistent with the Strong Non-Conceptualist reading. And if there is one lesson that interpreters of Kant can agree upon, it is that passages should rarely be read in isolation.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have suggested a way of interpreting Kant's solution to the problem he set for himself in the Transcendental Deduction, namely how the categories have objectively reality, or apply to objects of experience. This is a problem that arises because of his empiricist commitment to the view that theoretical knowledge, claims to narrow knowledge, must in some way appeal to intuition in order to be justified. It would be strange if Kant's solution to the problem of the objective reality of the categories entailed a rejection of the very empiricist commitment that gives rise to the problem in the first place. In fact, it would be no solution at all.

The Conceptualist reading argues that the categories can feature in theoretical knowledge and can be applied to objects insofar as our minds super-add categorial content into our perceptual experience of objects. But if justification of the categories is possible only by appeal to a perceptual content that our minds have themselves projected into experience, it is mysterious how we take ourselves to be talking about objects at all. The reason to be motivated by the

empiricist commitment in the first place is that intuition and its content ground knowledge in an immediate relation between subject and world.

The Strong Non-Conceptualist route I've defended introduces the notion of a use-relative transcendental condition, in a way that, I think, helps Kant out of the object problem. If the categories apply to objects, *insofar as objects can be determined*, then, if we assume that we can determine objects in space and time – as, say, the scientific concept of *nature* requires – we only need to show how the categories are necessary for achieving this end. Section 26 begins to tell the story of how categories are necessary for the determination of objects, but the Schematism, and also the Principles, are necessary parts of the story as well.

In the next chapter I engage another problem that arises for Kant, due to the grounding function of intuition in his theory of narrow knowledge. In the Refutation of Idealism, Kant attempts to defend his claim that perception is a sufficient ground for judgments of actuality.

Chapter 2: The Refutation of Idealism and the Time-Determinable Self

The Refutation of Idealism is one of the most provocative and ambitious passages in the first *Critique*. In just one paragraph, Kant takes himself to have turned the "game" played by "idealism," or Cartesian skepticism about the external world, "against it," (B276). In the last chapter, I argued that Kant's "Schematism" chapter aims to show how perception can be appealed to in justifying the application of the categories to objects. This task, which took Kant nearly ten years to carry out, was necessary because of his particular empiricist commitment that perception must be (in some way) drawn on for the justification of judgments with metaphysical import. The Refutation of Idealism addresses a certain challenge to this empiricist commitment, made by the legacy of Cartesian external-world skepticism. The familiar worry raised by Descartes is that perception as such might not be sufficient to justify existential judgments, at least not with the certainty we want from metaphysics. Kant's professed goal, therefore, is to show that we have outer *experience* and not merely outer imagination (B275). His professed strategy for treating the familiar Cartesian worry is to try to turn the tables on it, by showing that "inner experience, undoubted by Descartes, is possible only under the presupposition of outer experience," (B275).

I have two central aims in this chapter. First, I offer an interpretation of the strategy of the argument itself. The argument appeals to certain temporal features of inner experience in order to argue for conditions on a subject's capacity to "determine" her own existence in time. This chapter asks what exactly the relevant features of inner experience are *and* what exactly is involved in a subject's *determination* of her own existence? Kant's argument turns on the claim that perception of objects in space is a condition on time-determination. How is perception such

a condition and why should we believe that it is? I offer my own interpretation of Kant's answer to these questions in section 3.

In section 2, I consider and raise problems for one of the most widely received interpretations of Kant's central strategy, the "Causal Reading," as it has been reconstructed by Georges Dicker.[1] I argue that this view makes problematic assumptions about the sufficiency of memory for justifying judgments about the past. More importantly, it has a serious internal problem, which arises from an ungrounded argument by exclusion, which depends on the implausible claim that the grounds for certain claims to self-knowledge include only a very narrow set of possible justifiers. Roughly, it argues that if we cannot know the temporal order of our past experiences by memory alone, then *the only other way* we can know it is by appeal to the causal relations of things in space. The reconstruction I offer in section 3 is meant to avoid these difficulties. While the Causal Reading focuses on conditions of justification for our judgments of the *relative* temporal order of our experiences, I argue that Kant is more interested in the subject's ability to correctly determine her existence in an *objective* empirical time. For a subject to have this ability, she must represent herself as a *determinable* self. To do this *correctly*, certain conditions must obtain.

There is an irony worth noting in Kant's treatment of skepticism in the Refutation: It fights skepticism with skepticism. My second aim in this chapter is to situate the Refutation in the context of Kant's broader views about philosophical methodology and to show how transcendental idealism suggests a way of responding to a certain form of extreme skepticism.

[1] See Dicker, "Kant's Refutation of Idealism," *Noûs*, 42.1 (2008), 80-108. Dicker, was inspired by Paul Guyer's reconstruction and Jonathan Bennett's reading. See Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*, Cambridge University Press, 1987; and Bennett, *Kant's Analytic*, Cambridge University Press, 1966. Dicker, in contrast to Guyer, narrows his discussion to our knowledge of our past states and thereby raises questions related to memory. This change is inspired by Bennett. I take the name "Causal Reading," from Andrew Chignell. See Chignell, "Causal Refutations of Idealism," *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 60.240 (2010): 487-507.

Consideration of the treatment of skepticism in the 1781 edition of the *Critique* suggests that Kant thought there were such methodological reasons for dismissing skepticism, even if answering it is impossible. In section 4, I argue that to view the objects of outer sense with the global suspicion that skepticism requires amounts to taking what we might call a *noumenal* perspective on our own experience. That is, skepticism demands a kind of knowledge that could only be acquired from a noumenal point of view, a point of view which is impossible for human beings in the business of theoretical philosophy. This approach to extreme skepticism in no way refutes it and in fact reveals a sense in which skepticism of this kind is mandatory, but offers compelling Kantian reasons for, in effect, dismissing the question altogether as a non-question for theoretical philosophy. I conclude in section 5 by ruling out one final possible reconstruction of the argument. I begin, in section 1, by sketching some background to the passage.

Section 1: Background to the Refutation

The argument is widely understood to be a reaction to the infamous Göttingen Review by Garve and Feder of the 1781 or "A" edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason,* which interprets Kant as falling into the tradition of Berkeleyan idealism. The review claims that Kant's views about sensations as mere modifications of our state, together with his (supposed) view that sensations are the only objects of our direct awareness suggest that there is no straightforward distinction to be made between transcendental idealism and the idealism of British empiricism.[2]

[2] Published Anonymously in 1781, "The Göttingen Review," *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*, Ed. Sassen, Cambridge University Press, 2000. Although the review was published anonymously its authorship is attributed to Garve and Feder.

On the empiricist view of perception in question, we are only ever immediately aware of our own mental states, and then must infer the existence of the external causes of those states.

To be fair to the reviewers, Kant's initial treatment of idealism in the '81 edition's Fourth Paralogism is unfortunately ambiguous, and can be read as strongly idealist or phenomenalist. There Kant seems to argue that outer sense is just as epistemologically credible as inner sense, insofar as both faculties only ever put us in immediate relation to "mere appearances," understood merely as a "species of my representations" (A370).[3] So, on this reading, if Descartes' view is that we are only really ever directly aware of our own representations and not of outer objects, Kant's reply, on this reading, is simply to reject the idea that outer, material objects in space are anything but representations. If, in both cases, we are only ever talking about mere representations, then there is no reason to be any more skeptical about spatial objects than inner objects. He writes,

> But now external objects (bodies) are merely appearances, hence also nothing other than a species of my representations, whose objects are something only through these representations, but are nothing separated from them. Thus external things exist as well as my self, and indeed both exist on the immediate testimony of my self-consciousness, only with this difference: the representation of my Self, as the thinking subject, is related merely to inner sense, but the representations that designate extended beings are also related to outer sense. I am no more necessitated to draw inferences in respect of the reality of external objects than I am in regard to the reality of the objects of my inner sense (my thoughts)…(A371)

Although this passage smacks of idealism and may even seem to answer skepticism by mere redefinition, in section 4 below I suggest that we read these passages as expressive of a certain methodological attitude, which shifts the focus of skepticism from the "mediacy" or inferential nature of outer sense to a question about the possibility of knowing things independently of experience. This shift constitutes, I argue, a legitimate step forward in the debate about

[3] Kant explicitly rejects this claim in the B edition Refutation.

skepticism. Moreover, read in this light, the idealism of which these passages smack is (perhaps) less offensive (to some of us). Kant thinks that transcendental idealism is a sufficient treatment of, or alternative to, Berkeleyan phenomenalism. I take up these issues below.

The Refutation of Idealism appears in the 1787 edition of the *Critique* six years later, in part, as a reply to the strongly idealist reception of the '81 edition. In the set-up to the argument, Kant refers to two kinds of "material idealism," one which he attributes to Berkeley and the other to Descartes (B274). Berkeley's idealism, according to Kant, is the view that it is *impossible* that objects exist external to our representations. He calls this view "dogmatic idealism," because it derives synthetic *a priori* conclusions about the impossibility of space and spatiality in general, *as such*, or in-itself. While Kant was certainly concerned to distinguish himself from Berkeley, his target in the Refutation of Idealism is Descartes, who shares Berkeley's commitment that we are *immediately* aware only of our own inner states. Cartesian "problematic" idealism, or "skeptical idealism," as Kant calls it, is more pernicious. It is the epistemological position that we cannot know whether objects exist external to our senses, (B275).[4]

The Refutation occupies a curious place in the *Critique*. It is rather "tacked-on" to the "Postulates of Empirical Thinking," where Kant argues that the modal categories, namely, possibility, actuality, and necessity, have a restricted application, to objects of experience alone. He writes,

> 1.Whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts) is **possible.** 2. That which is connected with the material conditions of

[4] Of course Descartes himself did not subscribe to an idealist *metaphysics*, but thought that the existence of external objects could be legitimately inferred, since the reliability of the inference was guaranteed by God's benevolence. See Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, Trans Cottingham et al, Vol. 2, Cambridge University Press, 1986. Kant was, of course, aware of this. Kant's concern was to refute the idea that the existence of objects in space was less certain than the existence of objects of inner sense. Kant aims to show that perception puts us in, so to speak, more immediate contact with the existence of things. (See A368-369 for Kant's explicit statement of this.) Of course, none of this precludes the idea that intuition represents through marks. For more on this, see Smit, (2000).

> experience (of sensation) is **actual.** 3. That whose connection with the actual is determined in accordance with general conditions of experience is (exists) **necessarily,** (B266).

For an object or state of affairs to count as *possible*, in this sense, it must conform to the conditions for experience. It must be spatiotemporal and have a general causal and categorical structure. If it has these properties, then it is an object of possible experience. For an object to be judged to be *actual*, however, it must both conform to the conditions for experience and also be "connected with" the "matter" of experience, namely sensations, or perceptions. For Kant, "connection with" perception is both necessary and sufficient for judgments of actuality.[5]

In elaborating the postulate of actuality, Kant argues that the category still ranges over objects that are too small, too remote, or for some other reason imperceptible, if their existence follows from our best empirical laws, which are themselves grounded in immediate perception. (B273). He gives the following example,

> Thus we cognize the existence of a magnetic matter penetrating all bodies from the perception of attracted iron filings, although an immediate perception of this matter is impossible for us given the constitution of our organs. For in accordance with the laws of sensibility and the context of our perceptions we could also happen upon the immediate empirical intuition of it in an experience, if our sense, the crudeness of which does not affect the form of possible experience in general, were finer. (B273)

The magnetic matter posited in the example is itself imperceptible due to the coarseness of grain of our sensory capacities, but it still counts as actual insofar as it is consistent or "connected" with empirical laws. There are a variety of properties like this for Kant. Although these properties in no way admit of confirming instances in perception – for we never *see* magnetic matter – they can nevertheless be empirically tested, insofar as they follow rationally from

[5] The fact that actuality only requires "connection with" perception and not a direct perception is extremely important. It means that Kant acknowledge the existences of things that do not admit of direct confirming instances, including categorial properties, fundamental forces, as well as the remote objects he mentions in this passage.

claims that are directly confirmable.[6] Objects too small or remote can also be included, so long as they follow from empirical laws. In all of these cases, the (actual) existence of objects and properties can be determined *mediately*, by being connected with *immediate* perceptions.

Directly following this discussion, Kant introduces his new worry. He adds only a single transition sentence to the B edition of the Postulates to explain the appearance of the Refutation in an otherwise unaltered chapter, a sentence which claims that "idealism" poses a "powerful objection" to his "rules for proving existence mediately," (B274). Several questions arise in light of this transition. First, it might seem strange that Kant thinks Cartesian skepticism about external objects poses a special challenge to rules for proving existence *mediately*, or for judging the actuality of scientific posits and remote objects. It does pose a problem for them, but, one would assume, by extension of the deeper worry that even our *immediate* perceptions, perceptions of things here and now, are themselves called into question by Cartesian skepticism.

Kant's footnote to the argument of the Refutation offers some help. "The **immediate** consciousness of the existence of outer things is not presupposed but proved…" (fn B276). Kant thinks that one of the conclusions of the Refutation is that inner experience, or my determinate knowledge of my own existence through time, is mediated by outer experience, which in turn depends on the *immediacy* of outer sense, or perception. Cartesian skepticism, as Kant understands it, is predicated on a particular view of perception according to which a subject must *infer* the existence of an object in space from her immediate awareness of her own mental states.

[6] There is a question whether Kant thinks that the attractive, repulsive, and mechanical forces that he argues are essential properties of matter in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science* are also imperceptible for this reason. See Kant, *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, Trans. Friedman, Cambridge University Press, 2004. I think it is unlikely. Yet the *MFNS* was published just one year before the 1787 edition of the *Critique*. As essential, these forces are posited as *necessary* features of matter. Kant certainly thinks we see evidence of these forces all around us and that we must posit these forces as laws of nature. So Kant at least thinks perception can be drawn on as evidence of the action of a force, so the forces are "connected with" the matter of perception, and so are actual.

Skepticism, on this picture, comes in when we raise doubts about the reliability of this inference, doubts which Kant raises explicitly himself in the A edition treatment of skepticism:

> But now the inference from a given effect to its determinate cause is always uncertain, since the effect can have arisen from more than one cause. Accordingly, in the relation of perception to its cause, it always remains doubtful whether this cause is internal or external, thus whether all so-called outer perceptions are not a mere play of our inner sense…(A368)

The point is that if we are only ever immediately aware of our own states, then any inference to the determinate cause of those states will be, as mediated, *less certain* than those claims made on the bases of immediate awareness. Descartes' view (as Kant understands it) assumes that *any* existential claims about objects made on the basis of perception are going to be mediated by an inference of this problematic kind. Because Kant means, in his own language, to "prove" *that outer sense is immediate* — i.e. relates to and represents its objects and their existence directly — framing the problem of the Refutation in terms of raising doubts about *immediate* perceptions is just terminologically confused.[7] In Kant's terms, Descartes thinks that only inner sense offers the existence of its objects *immediately,* i.e. the existence of our thoughts and the thinking subject, and so it is only inner sense that we can trust. Kant means to show that, in fact, outer sense represents determinable objects in an immediate way, and that even inner experience depends on the immediacy of outer sense.[8]

The strange transition sentence tells us that Kant also means to challenge the view that, methodologically speaking, we can only ever *trust*, or treat as reliable, those faculties that offer

[7] We should thus be careful not to read contemporary versions of skepticism back into this conversation. Kant is intentionally setting up the debate in terms of the *capacities* for inner and outer experience. By "experience," Kant means a kind of empirical knowledge or judgment. By contrast "sense," as I argued in chapter 1, offers us perceptual representations which have a non-conceptual content. He is trying to show now that outer sense is immediate.

[8] By "determinable objects" I mean those objects that we can come to represent *as objective*. As we will see, Kant's aim is to show that outer sense offers its determinable objects immediately, but that I can only represent the self as a determinable object if I have a well-functioning outer sense.

their objects *immediately*. The Refutation of Idealism is, after all, a defense of "these rules for proving existence *mediately*." Kant means to show that mere "connection with" perception via empirical laws is sufficient for claims to actuality, so he is interested in showing that we can trust both the faculty of outer sense, which is immediate, and also the inferred empirical knowledge claims we make on the basis of it. He is thus resisting the methodological principle that is the engine of hyperbolic doubt in the *Meditations*, according to which immediate awareness is necessary for knowledge. We can formulate the Cartesian methodological requirement as follows:

> Immediacy Requirement of Hyperbolic Doubt: Immediate awareness of an object or property is necessary and sufficient for having knowledge of the existence of that object or property.[9]

The Refutation of Idealism "turns the game idealism plays against it" by offering a counterexample to this requirement. If, as Kant argues, inner experience of a *self* depends on, or "is possible only under the presupposition of" outer experience, then my knowledge of my own determinate existence is just as *mediated* as my knowledge of remote or very small objects is. Kant's point, then, is that, if we want to call into doubt the existence of those objects that are known in a *mediated* rather than an immediate way, then we also have to call into question our own existence. Kant does not mean to call into question the reliability of our inner experience (at least not here),[10] but rather means to show that the use of inference in existential judgments is epistemologically permissible, if the existence of the object follows from our best empirical

[9] Of course this requirement would only hold in the context of hyperbolic doubt, i.e. for the Cartesian meditator who is worried about the possibility of an evil deceiver. Descartes does not refer to any criterion of immediacy, but the *context* of meditation seems to presuppose it. Ultimately, I am not here so much concerned with whether this is an accurate representation of Descartes' own views. Rather I am more concerned with Kant's understanding of Cartesian skepticism.

[10] He does call into doubt the possibility of an empirical *science* of inner sense, i.e. psychology, in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. See (*MFNS,* 471).

laws, or bears some other "connection with perception." This aspect of Kant's argument would in no way satisfy an extreme skeptic – who would simply call into question the certainty of mediated inner experience as well – but it at least gives us better reason to reject Cartesian skepticism as any kind of a starting point for philosophy.

In the context of hyperbolic doubt, and on the Cartesian model of perception, enjoying a putative perception of x is sufficient for judging that you are having such a putative perception, but is insufficient for inferring the actuality of x. For this reason, Kant refers to Cartesian skepticism as "problematic idealism." It is "problematic" not because it is trickier than Berkeleyan idealism (although it is very tricky), but rather because, according to its framework, the existence of objects in space outside of us can be judged only problematically, and not assertorically. That is, we can legitimately entertain their existence and their non-existence but do not have sufficient grounds (i.e. the requisite certainty) to assert their existence.[11] Given the Immediacy requirement on knowledge (or on knowledge in the context of hyperbolic doubt), we cannot "prove" the actuality of external objects, so their existence is judged to be merely *possible*. Kant's goal in the Refutation, then, is to defend his postulate of actuality – the claim that outer experience is sufficient — from this kind of attack.

With this background in place, we can move on to the argument itself. Kant's expressed goal in the Refutation is to argue that, "we have **experience** and not merely **imagination** of outer things," (B275). He hopes to show that outer sense is immediate, and so puts us in contact with the *existence* of objects in space. Kant's strategy is to try to show that our claim to knowledge of our own existence as it is or can be determined in and through time, a claim which he thinks Descartes would grant, presupposes genuine outer experience of objects in space (B275).

[11] I say much more about the problematic and assertoric attitudes in the chapter 3.

The stated "theorem" to be demonstrated is as follows:

> **"The mere, but empirically determined, consciousness of my own existence (*Dasein*) proves the existence of objects in space outside me."** (B275)

This theorem is pretty loaded, even from an interpretive point of view. The fact that the consciousness in question is "empirically determined," is already a challenge to Descartes. Kant thinks that Descartes has mischaracterized the type of information we can gather in being aware of our own existence through thinking the thought "I think." Kant is thus assuming his own distinction between transcendental apperception and inner sense. Through the mere "I think," according to Kant, I know *that* I exist, but not *how*. To know *how* we exist also need inner sense (B157-58).[12] The fact that the consciousness is *determined* also shows that Kant is interested in inner *experience* of ourselves, which is a determinate and systematic kind of knowledge, as opposed to a merely apparent awareness.

Here is the argument:

> [1] I am conscious of my existence as determined in time. [2] All time determination presupposes something **persistent** in perception. [3] This persistent thing, however, cannot be an intuition in me. For all grounds of determination of my existence that can be encountered in me are representations, and as such require something persistent that is distinct even from them, in relation to which their change, thus my existence in the time in which they change, can be determined.[13] [4] Thus the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a **thing** outside me and not through the mere **representation** of a thing outside me. [5] Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself. (B275-6, my numbering)

[12] We need inner sense to register the contents of our experiences together with the way we are affected by the understanding through thinking. As it turns out, however, we also need *outer* sense to know some of the ways we exist, namely as members of the objective order of things.

[13] In the Preface to the B edition of the *Critique*, Kant writes that the sentence that begins "This persistent thing, however, cannot be something in me…" should be the sentence, "This persistent thing, however, cannot be an intuition in me. Kant apparently could not make the substitution himself, because the main body of the text was already off to the publishers. The paragraph as quoted above reflects the change Kant instructed, (Bxxxix).

One could argue that the proof ends here. If the argument up to this point is sound, then it shows that the "determination of my existence in time," whatever that turns out to mean, is possible only under the supposition that actual things that I perceive outside of myself, and not merely the representation of such things, exist. But Kant draws some further conclusions,

> [6] Now consciousness in time is necessarily combined with the consciousness of the possibility of this time-determination: Therefore it is also necessarily combined with the existence of the things outside me, as the condition of time-determination; i.e., the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me. (B276)

There are a number of questions that follow from these additional remarks. For one, the claim that "consciousness of my own existence is *at the same time* an *immediate* consciousness of the existence of other things," might seem to suggest that the content of one's awareness of oneself includes a direct or immediate awareness of outer objects. On one understanding of this claim, it might suggest that I could not shut myself into a sensory deprivation chamber and be directly aware of the stream of my own consciousness, which seems like and absurd consequence. I respond to this apparent problem in section 3, when I offer my own reading of claim (6) and reply to the sensory deprivation objection directly. The Causal Reading, however, considered in section 2, has more difficulty with this objection. It is to that reading that I now turn.

Section 2: The Causal Reading

The Causal Reading (or CR) assumes that there is a question about how a subject comes to make correct determinations, or judgments, about the relative temporal order of her own

experiences, understood as "subjective states."[14] The background assumption is Kant's claim that we cannot directly perceive time. Dicker writes,

> Suppose that you have had two successive experiences, E1 that occurred at time t1, and E2 that occurred at the later time t2. Kant takes it as a datum that at a still later time, t3, you can know that you had E1 before E2. But he sees that there is a question about how you know this. For at t3, both E1 and E2 have come and gone, so that you cannot then tell by perception whether they occurred in the order E1, E2, or in the order E2, E1. In other words, your present sate at t3 –call it E3—does not in itself contain E1 or E2, but only the memories of E1 and of E2. **But these memories could represent these states as having occurred in either order**.[15]

According to CR, the question raised by the Refutation is how a subject's judgments about the temporal order of her past experiences are ever justified, assuming (for some reason) that memory is unreliable for this purpose. The first premise of the Refutation -- "I am conscious of my existence as determined in time," -- is understood in terms of the minimal ability to judge at some later time t3 that, "[I] had E1 *before* E2." It is also assumed that, "these memories could represent these states as having occurred in either order." CR's solution, given these constraints, is that a subject's empirical knowledge of the relative order of her own mental states depends on the knowledge she has of the objective states of affairs that *caused* her subjective experiences. To use Paul Guyer's original example, in order to know the order of two subjective experiences, being appeared to "Aly," e.g. "chairly," and then being appeared to "Bly," "deskishly," a subject must know which objective states of affairs caused each of those experiences, the chair and the

[14] The Causal Reading relies explicitly on handwritten notes from Kant's later work. See Guyer, (1987), chs. 12-13, 279-305. Because Kant argues in Second Analogy that my awareness of the *necessary* succession of some of my own mental states (i.e. their irreversibility) presupposes that the order of those states is constrained by the causal powers of the things they are about, it is not implausible to imagine that Kant might try (or did try) to apply this line of reasoning in a refutation of idealism. I focus on Kant's published argument in the '87 edition largely because, as published, we can assume it was, at least at some point, his considered view.

[15] Dicker, (2008), p. 84, my emphasis.

desk, as well as the temporal relations of those objective states.[16] This entails that the subject must also know a causal theory of mind.

Here is Dicker's reconstruction:[17]

(1) I can correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences.
(2) When I remember two or more past experiences, my recollection of those experiences does not itself reveal the order in which they occurred.
(3) If (2), then I cannot correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences just by recollecting those experiences.
(4) I cannot correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences just by recollecting those experiences. (From 2 and 3)
(5) If I cannot correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences just by recollecting those experiences, then I can correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences only if I know that my experiences are caused by successive objective states of affairs that I perceive.
(6) I can correctly determine the order in time of my own subjective experiences only if I know that my experiences are caused by successive objective states of affairs that I perceive. (From 4 and 5)
(7) I know that my experiences are caused by successive objective states of affairs that I perceived. (From 1 and 6)

It seems true that a subject's knowledge of the history of her mental life is an ingredient in her coming to know her existence through the time in which that history unfolded. Dicker's view begins with the question how it is that a subject can come to know this history, this relative

[16] See Guyer, (1987), pp. 306-07 for a thorough discussion of this example. Guyer thinks we cannot even tell the temporal order of past states relative to current states, because, "…Unlike Hume, he [Kant] never suggests that there is any phenomenological feature such as degree of vivacity which could automatically mark one appearance as, for instance, a present impression and another as a mere memory."

There is a disagreement between Guyer and Dicker about whether we should be talking about past states or all states. The passage from Dicker is concerned solely with *past* experiences, because he thinks that subjects can "tell by perception" whether an experience is a present experience or not. Guyer's view includes current experiences. I agree with Dicker's claim that a subject can tell the difference between a present state and a memory merely by enjoying them, and I think Kant would agree to this point as well. Kant's discussion of memory in the *Anthropology* suggests that a memory is an attitude that we take towards a content, which is issued by a *faculty* of memory. If memory is its own type of attitude, then we should be able to tell the difference between memories and current experiences. Moreover, Kant's discussion of the empirical grounds for positing the existence of cognitive faculties in the first place in the *Critique of Practical Reason* suggests that we know the difference between mental states by *experiencing* them (enjoying them in different ways). See (*Anthropology*, 182-83, pp.75-6), and (*CPrR*, 5:47). If we can distinguish our basic cognitive faculties by experience alone (*CPrR*), and memory is a distinct cognitive faculty (*Anthropology*), then we distinguish memory by experience. This entails that memories have a distinct feeling (perhaps "pastness," perhaps merely of being a certain type of state) that we can experience.

[17] Dicker actually offers a further reconstruction in which he aims to show that even *seeming* to be able to correctly determine the order of my subjective experiences requires knowledge of the existence of things in space. I think this version of the argument is worse off, so I do not consider it here. See Dicker, (2008).

temporal order. Suppose a subject wants to know whether she was the first to have an idea, or whether she heard it first from her friend. Granting that she both thought x and heard x, she wants to know whether she thought x *before* she heard x. How might she figure this out? Perhaps she might recall that she thought of the idea while reading a book by her favorite novelist, and so recalls causally interacting with the book. She knows she returned that book to the library over a month ago. She knows she spoke with her friend about the idea at lunch last Tuesday, because she went to the dentist right before lunch and had the dentist appointment on Tuesday. So she can infer, on the basis of all this information, that she must have had the idea before having the occasion to talk to her friend about it.

While a subject certainly could refer to features of the world in this way to figure out this kind of history, there are nevertheless a number of problems with CR. I argue that the reading (i) relies on an implausible view of memory; (ii) ignores certain cognitive resources available to the subject that have nothing to do with objects in space; and (iii) has a crucial internal problem.

(i) *Memory*: By ruling out a subject's access to her own mental history by memory alone in premise (2), while at the same time assuming that a subject can *know* causal information about the objects that caused her past experiences in premise (5), the view assumes (and saddles Kant with) an implausible and somewhat schizophrenic view of memory. If a subject can know the temporal properties of *past* objective states of affairs, then her knowledge must be based on her *memory* of these past states of affairs. Yet at the same time, Dicker calls into doubt the reliability of her memory for recalling the mere relative temporal order of her past thoughts and perceptions. On Dicker's view, a subject would have no problem recalling, for example, "My car keys *were* on the counter, when the doorbell rang," but would need a whole host of additional evidence, including knowledge of a causal theory of perception, to judge that "I *saw* my keys on

the counter *and then heard* the doorbell ring." But why should we grant this assumption of asymmetry? And why would a Cartesian grant it?

I simply do often remember that the wine *tasted* a certain way or that the hot summer *felt* a certain way, not just that they *were* a certain way. The modalities through which the perceptions are given factor into the way the content is registered and recalled in memory. Because perceptual content is often registered in memory in a modality-specific way, along with its temporal content, I do not need to make inferences based on information of the *causes* of my perceptions, which would require knowing a causal theory of perception. I can recall *seeing that x*, or *hearing that y* without necessarily having to make inferences about how my perceptual system must have causally interacted with the environment to gather information to form a representation. Moreover, merely enjoying the memory tells me that it was *I* who tasted the wine and *I* who felt the heat. I do not simply recall that there was a tasting of wine and a feeling of heat. In the *Anthropology*, Kant claims that memory is the faculty "where one is conscious of one's ideas as those which would be encountered in one's past…state.[18]" If through memory we can be conscious of our ideas *as those* that would be encountered in *our past state*, then memory is sufficient for making the relevant judgments about our past states and their relative order.

Perhaps Dicker's problem with memory is that it is fallible. Perhaps he is implicitly concerned with the memory skeptic's worry that, for all we know, we might have been brought into existence five minutes ago. If this is Dicker's worry, however, it makes no sense to grant that we can directly and reliably recall past events in the world. If Dicker's worry in premises (2) and (3) is motivated by memory skepticism, then the claim in premise (5) that we can (for must entails can) know information about past states of the world is incoherent. I think this is

[18] *Anthropology*, (Ak: 182, p.75*)*

reason enough to think Dicker is not worried about memory skepticism. Rather, he assumes that there is a special problem for memory in cases of self-knowledge, but this assumption seems unwarranted.

Moreover, Dicker's view of the information to which we have access in recalling a past objective state of affairs seems problematic. Imagine that you've witnessed a crime. Suppose I ask you to try to recall whether you *saw* a red car drive by before you *heard* a gun fire. I would be asking you to recall the relative temporal order of your experiences. How would you go about trying to recall this information? Naturally, you would reflect on what these experiences were *about*. You would attend to the contents of those episodic memories and their relevant details. Perhaps you would recall that the car passed the house with the blue door as you heard the shot fire. You would use this recalled contextual information to justify your claim about the order of events. This same information would justify your judgment that it was you who witnessed them. But although, in normal circumstances, we are entitled to take our recollections at face value, in the context of Cartesian skepticism, reflection on the contents of our experiences is not ipso facto *veridical* reflection on the *causes* of those experiences. If reflection on the contents of our experiences were sufficient for knowing their causes, then we could never mistake dreams for reality or be subject to illusions. What's worse, the questions of Cartesian skepticism – even as Kant represents Descartes – could not be coherently raised. To raise doubts about whether we might be trapped in a perpetual dream, subject to an Evil Deceiver, or trapped as brains in vats, just is to raise doubts about whether the causes of our experiences are the usual causes. It depends on the thought that perhaps they might be caused in an unusual way. So, if Kant's

argument assumes that we can *know* the causes of our experiences simply by recalling the contents of our experiences, then he is begging the question.[19]

Finally, to the extent that I can remember a car in motion at all, my memories, together with the perceptions on which they are based, come with *temporal* semantic contents.[20] If I can even minimally perceive, for example, an object on a surface, like a car on a street, then I am already in the business of representing relations in space and time. When I recall that the car drove past the house, my recollection is of the car moving relative to a fixed space. I can remember that I saw this motion. If memory alone is sufficient to judge that I saw the car drive from the house to the end of the block, then it is sufficient to judge that I saw the car *at* the house *before* I saw it at the end of the block. Memory is sufficient for recollecting the temporal order of these experiences, so Dicker's premise (2) is in trouble.[21]

(ii) *Other Resources*: The second problem with the argument arises from the fact that there are other resources available to a subject who is trying to recall some series of mental events, which do not consist in appeals to objects in space or their causal relations. These alternatives constitute counterexamples to Dicker's premise (5), the claim that if I cannot order my subjective experiences in time just by recollecting them, then I can order them **only if** I know that my experiences are caused by the successive objective states of affairs that I perceive. There seem to be a number of other resources available to a subject who is trying to figure out the

[19] I do think Kant thinks we can know, in ordinary circumstances, the phenomenal causes of our experiences by empirical inquiry (and, say, a science of perception). The problem is that Dicker's premise (5) assumes that we have direct and immediate access to these causes through memory alone. It assumes that the contents being recalled are also – by this mere recollection – *known* to be the *causes* of the experiences. But this amounts to saying that we can know by memory that we have enjoyed *genuine* experience, which begs the question against the skeptic. I say more about this point in section 4 below.

[20] See chapter 1 for a discussion of the role of the schemata of the categories in temporal experience.

[21] Bennett might also have had something like this example in mind in his third type of case.

temporal order of her past states. Knowledge of deductive reasoning, possession of the concept of intentional action, and knowledge of how mental associations work, are just some examples of resources a subject can draw on to recall the temporal order of her past experiences. I treat these cases in turn below. None of these alternatives, however, appeal to the causal relations in which a subject stands to objects that she perceives, but instead to objective states of the subject's psychology or to abstract entities. If these alternatives are genuine alternatives, then, contrary to premise (5), knowledge of objects in space is not necessary for knowledge of the temporal order of my states.

> (DEDUCTION) I can remember the temporal order of some of the thoughts I had while listening to a speaker at a philosophy talk by remembering the structure of the argument I heard, as I heard it. Suppose I have distinct individual memories of some premises, "If p, then q," and "p," the conclusion "Therefore, q," and of the argument being of the form of modus ponens. On the basis of these individual memories, together with my knowledge of the logical form of the argument, I am entitled to judge that I thought the premise "If p, then q" *before* the conclusion "q."[22]
>
> (INTENTIONAL ACTION): I can judge that I intended to open the fridge before I decided to have a bowl of cereal, if I recall that my *intention* was to go open the fridge *to figure out* what to eat. I can judge that I intended *before* I decided, because the decision was the object of the intention.[23]

[22] One might object that, if logical forms exist in a platonic heaven, they don't tell us anything about the *temporal* order of our original experiences of the argument. Only the suppressed empirical premise that, e.g., the verbalization of logical arguments takes time (and that the speaker gave the argument in order, as opposed to saying "I'm going to argue that *q* because, first of all, *p* and second of all, *if p then q*"), can give us the temporal content we need. Such an empirical claim would be an appeal to the causal relations the Dicker reading requires. Perhaps this works sometimes. The issue is whether there isn't some other way of deriving the same content. On Kant's view of general logic, logical rules describe the laws that govern our faculty of thinking (in some way, whether normatively or descriptively). For a helpful discussion of this topic, see Tolley, "Kant on the Nature of Logical Laws," *Philosophical Topics*, 34.1 (2006): 371-407. So I am entitled to my inference about the order of my own experiences simply by virtue of my knowledge of the rule of inference along with perhaps the knowledge that thinking occurs through time. See (*JL*, 11-16).

[23] Of course, a veridical memory of an intention to x does not guarantee that the subject actually x'd. Perhaps this would be a problem if the subject merely remembered intending to open the fridge, but in this case, she remembers opening the fridge and getting something to eat as well. She knows her intention to act was fulfilled, because she remembers the action. In this case, her memory alone gives her reason, or at least evidence, for the judgment "I intended before I decided."

> (ASSOCIATION): I recall the first time I visited a funeral home. Part of that recollection includes noticing that the smell of formaldehyde reminded me of the experience of dissecting a frog in biology class. I can judge that my experience of dissecting the frog preceded my experience in the funeral home, because I acquired the association before noticing I had it.

The subjects considered in (DEDUCTION), (INTENTION), and (ASSOCIATION) rely on information they have about objective matters that are not objects in space, namely knowledge about deductive logic, practical reasoning, and mental associations. The information in question is "external" to the extent that it is external to the content of the memories in question, or external to the subjective experience, but they are not thereby objects in space.

(iii) *Internal Problem*: Finally, the most serious problem with Dicker's argument is methodological and arises with premise (5). It emerges from Dicker's concession and treatment of a set of counter-examples to his premise (2), which he gathers from Bennett,

> If Y occurred so soon after X that one can recall a specious present containing both, then one can simply recall that X preceded Y. If this were not so, one could not simply recall hearing someone say 'damn' rather than 'mad'. (b) From this it follows that one can simply recall that X preceded Y if one can recall a continuous sequence of happenings starting with X and ending with Y…(c) One may simply recall that X preceded Y by recalling a time when one experienced Y while recalling X.[24,25]

[24] See Bennett, (1966), 228.

[25] The first type of case involves the temporal order of the so-called "specious present." To use Bennett's example, I can easily tell that I heard the word "Damn," rather than the word, "mad!" because the continuous phrase constitutes a specious present. And I simply do remember the temporal order of my experiences in a specious present. The second type of Bennett case is an extension of the first. If we grant that subjects can order their experiences in a specious present, and if memory provides a similarly detailed play-by-play of a longer period of time, then the subject sometimes knows the order of her experiences on the basis of memory alone. But, Dicker argues, like the first type of case, the second type of case occurs relatively rarely. The third type of Bennett case involves the recollection of events that themselves included acts of recollection of mental states. A parent can correctly judge that the (A) feeling of anxiety she experienced when her child took the game-winning shot at the buzzer occurred long before the (B) feeling of pride she experienced when her daughter was named MVP that season, because part of her experience in (B) (the feeling of pride at the awards ceremony) was the recollection of (A) (the feeling of anxiety at the buzzer shot). Merely recalling (B) comes with a built-in temporal ordering of '(A) before (B).' The third type of case is special in that the memory itself is already *about* a mental state. The memory is of *feeling* pride at a certain event.

Dicker *grants* that sometimes a subject *can* simply recall the temporal order of her own sates, and so does not need to rely on information about external objects. We might then ask, how can he stand by the generality of his proof? In considering this worry, Dicker claims that the Bennett cases are so rare, they are insignificant. Kant is permitted to start from universal claims about *actual* human experience, and in most cases human subjects must appeal to causal states of affairs.[26] Andrew Chignell objects in his critical reply to Dicker that, Kant, a champion of the *a priori*, would not ground his *a priori* Refutation of Idealism on the empirical, psychological, and contingent premise that "luckily" Bennett-style cases are rare for most of us. We can imagine a subject for whom they are not so rare.[27]

This dialectic is about the empirical, and therefore contingent, nature of premise (2). Yet the real problem with the argument is not the fact that (2) is an empirical claim, or has empirical content. The *Critique*'s very starting points are, at bottom, empirical claims about the mind. Even the distinction between the faculties of sensibility and understanding is, at bottom, known by experience, or by introspection, of the state types produced by those faculties and is therefore a contingent fact about human minds. (Why, for example, is it impossible that there could be a mind with intellectual intuition? It is not really *impossible*. Rather, the claim about human minds having two primary cognitive faculties is itself an observation about our mental lives, from which we, in turn, derive *a priori* conclusions.[28]) The real problem of the argument is that

[26] We might think that (DEDUCTION), (INTENTION), and (ASSOCIATION) are additional Bennett-style cases. But they aren't strictly so, insofar as the inferences in question depend on more than memory alone. Although they all in part depend on memory, they also require additional beliefs about logic and the way the mind works to justify judgments about temporal order.

[27] See Dicker, (2008), pp. 87-9. See Chignell, (2010), pp. 504-05.

[28] The following passage was brought to my attention in reading Patricia Kitcher, (1989). See (*CPrR*, 5:47). Kant writes, "But all human insight is at an end as soon as we have arrived at basic powers or faculties…in the theoretical use of reason *only experience* can justify us in assuming them," (my italics). There's no strong sense of necessity that underlies the fact that human beings have a certain type of sensibility and *no* intellectual intuition – this is

premise (5) makes a quick and dirty argument by exclusion based on a rather narrowly conceived set of options.

Dicker claims that his argument is successful because in *most* cases of inner time-determination, subjects must appeal to their causal knowledge of external objects. But the relative success of Dicker's argument does not even strictly require that in most cases, or even in *all* cases, subjects employ their causal knowledge. The argument would be (relatively) successful if Dicker could show that in at least *one* case, *the only way* a subject can determine the temporal order of her subjective states is the causal way. If Dicker could provide even *a single* example of a case that requires this *unique* kind of justifier, he would have proven the existence of the external world (at least for some time), no psychological statistics required.[29] But how could he show such a thing?

There are two problems worth noting. First, what would such a case look like? It wouldn't look like the case of seeing the keys and then hearing the doorbell ring, or seeing the car drive by and then hearing the gun shot. As we've seen, often subjects simply can remember the order of more or less temporally contiguous experiences. Perhaps it would have to be a case in which the experiences occur some time apart, perhaps days, weeks, or months apart. Suppose a subject recalls having had two past experiences. She has some flash of memory of having tied her shoelaces and another flash of having eaten a cheese sandwich. Suppose she cannot

---

merely a *fact*, known empirically, about our psychological constitution. The problem with Dicker's treatment of Bennett's cases has nothing to do with the empirical nature of the treatment. Rather, the problem is with showing that in at least one case, or one type of case, the causal way is *the only way*.

[29] Of course, Chignell is right that it would be even better if Dicker could show that the causal way is the only way for all cases. If he could show that, then each time we made judgments about the temporal order of our own states we would know the existence of external objects. But the argument would still be pretty successful against Descartes (and Berkeley) if it could show that there *is* and must be *some* external and spatial world, even if we cannot say we know it and all of its details at all times. But no one would say we know the world in all its detail anyway.

remember the order in which these two psychological events occurred (and for some reason feels like she ought to determine their order). Dicker might argue that, to figure out the temporal order of these experiences, she must refer to the memory she had of the objects that caused them and their temporal contexts. She might inquire, "Was it lunch or dinner when I ate the sandwich?" "What was the weather like the day that I ate it?" "Was I tying my shoes when I first put them on in the morning?" These are questions about both the context of the experience and about the context of the objects that (at least we assume) caused the experiences.[30]

The problem with cases of temporally dis-contiguous experiences is that a skeptic would certainly call into doubt the capacity to make judgments about their temporal order. Premise (1) of the Refutation, on the Causal Reading, assumes that a subject has an indubitable capacity to judge the temporal order of her experiences. This capacity must be so mundane that a Cartesian skeptic would accept that we all have it. The capacity to *figure out* the temporal order of two such very non-descript experiences requires *investigation* into what the past was like, and is certainly not something that a Cartesian (let alone a more serious skeptic) should grant.[31]

Second, the very idea that there is *only one way* is problematic. Premise (5) claims roughly that, if knowing some *x* in some particular way *w* is ruled out, then the *only other way* to know *x* is by way *z*. But certainly *w* and *z* do not *exhaust* the set of *possible* justifiers. To show that there is only *one* possible story to tell for any given instance of determining the temporal order of our experiences would require showing that any *and all* other empirical information that

[30] Really this is still reflection on the contents of ones' experience, which does not yet reveal the causes.

[31] That a subject can usually remember the order of her more meaningful experiences—say her high school graduation, the last time she would ever see her friend, a catastrophic event of global importance—is not really at issue. Important events can be easily recalled and ordered, because their contents are already dated (thanks to Michael Brent for raising this point to me in discussion). Even if the subject does not recall the exact dates, memory registers the context of the percept due to the psychological impact the meaningful event. We all remember where we were and what we were doing when the second plane hit. We also all know the date and approximate time of day.

could be gathered about those experiences (whether behavioral, neurological, psychological, etc.) would be *insufficient* for making the inference.[32] This seems like a tall order. The argument by exclusion in premise (5) seems unfounded.

In the next section I propose an alternative interpretation.[33] I agree with CR that Kant is trying to prove something of the form: The correct determination of x requires the correct determination of y. I disagree about what x and y stand for, what the relation between x and y is, and what is precisely at stake in appeals to "correct determination."

Section 3: Rereading the Refutation

In raising the question how we can be conscious of our existence *as determined* in time, Kant must be up to something else. He is looking at the conditions for objective and empirical time-determination in order to argue that certain *minimal* conditions must obtain in order for us to truly, or veridically, represent ourselves as *objective* selves, or selves that can be known in an objective way.

[32] The kind of justifiers appealed to in (DEDUCTION), (ASSOCIATION), and (INTENTION) would also be off limits.

[33] The reading I defend in what follows bears certain affinities with Henry Allison's "backdrop" reading. See Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism, An Interpretation and Defense*, Yale University Press, 1983. Initially, I was leaning towards a reading that centered on the conditions for the *perception* of time. However, the object problem raised in chapter 1 led me to rethink the function of the schemata in Kant's argument for the objective reality of the categories. Because the schemata are *use-relative* transcendental conditions on perception and not constitutive transcendental conditions, they are not necessary for the *mere* perception, or *mere* appearance, of time. Rather, they are necessary conditions on perception when perception is being used to justify objective knowledge claims about time, or, to put the same point differently, when perception is being transformed into *experience*. This change suggested the alternate reading of the Refutation given below, which in the end, has some commonalities with Allison's reading. Our readings diverge on interpreting the crucial premise (3). I say more about this below. I also offer new replies to some objections to Kant's argument.

In the Schematism, Kant claims that the perception of "the persistence of the real in time," is the application condition, or *schema,* for the category of "substance."[34] To say that persistence is the schema for substance, then, is to say that the perception as of a thing *persisting* for some length of time entitles a subject to judge that there is a substance. The tricky thing about the categories, as we also saw in chapter 1, is that they do not, at least not in their full universal and necessary robustness, admit of confirming instances in perception. Of course, following Hume, universal and necessary claims can't possibly admit of instances that sufficiently confirm them. Kant's solution, in the case of the categories, is to argue that the schemata are part of the *way* the mind represents things that *are directly* intuited, when a subject is in the business of objective time-determination. They are the rules the mind follows in apprehending objects when perception is called upon for the sake of justifying these kinds of judgments.[35] And they are only ever correctly applied when the right kind of information is directly intuited. If all objects of perception can be determined in time, then the schemata, and consequently the categories, hold universally and necessarily. The persisting thing that, according to premise (2), is a condition on the determination of my existence in time just is the schema for the category of substance. In the statement of the schema, Kant writes,

> The schema of substance is the persistence of the real in time, i.e., the representation of the real as a substratum of empirical time-determination in general, which therefore endures while everything else changes. (Time itself does not elapse, but the existence of that which is changeable elapses in it…in it [substance] alone can the succession and simultaneity of appearances be determined in regard to time.) (A144/B183)

The statement of the schema anticipates several of the claims from the First Analogy. Kant's claim in the Schematism that "in [persistence, substance] alone can the succession and

[34] For an example of a purely "application conditions" reading, see Walker, (1999), Ch. 7. See chapter 1 for my elaborated treatment of the schemata as use-relative transcendental conditions.

[35] For that reason they are use-relative transcendental conditions on perception.

simultaneity of appearances be determined in regard to time," is only fully argued in the First Analogy. The argument amounts to an assault on the empiricist model of perception that the Garve-Feder review accused him of endorsing, according to which we are only ever directly aware of our own inner states. He writes,

> Our apprehension of the manifold of appearances is always successive…We can therefore never determine from this alone whether this manifold, as object of experience, is simultaneous or successive, if something does not ground it which always exists, i.e., something lasting and persisting, of which all change and simultaneity are nothing but so many ways (*modi* of time) in which that which persists exists. (A182/B225)

Because apprehension is *always* successive, when we become aware of our own representations as such, they always *appear* to us in a successive stream. If our subjective states always appear to us successively, then their temporal properties provide us with no information for figuring out the temporal properties of the objects these states are about. To use Kant's example, imagine looking at a house, such that your gaze moves from roof to door. Your perceiving of the roof occurs before your perceiving of the door, but the roof does not in any sense precede the door "in the object." On the contrary, despite the successive properties of your perceivings, the properties of the house are, and are represented as, simultaneous in, or co-occurring in the object, (A190/B235). Consequently, your awareness of your own perceptions *as subjective states* – i.e., as states of you — is therefore insufficient for determining the objective temporal relations of properties in the house – i.e. as states of something distinct from you.[36]

How then, Kant asks, do we manage to determine objective simultaneity and objective succession? Kant's answer – which seems rather obvious to us – is that there must be something

[36] Today we might put this point in terms of the distinction between a mental state's content type and a mental state's vehicle type. Because apprehension itself occurs through time, our states of apprehension, when we are aware of them *as such*, or when we are aware of the *vehicles* that bear the contents apprehended, always appear in successive order. Thus our awareness of the succession of vehicles is never sufficient for inferring objective properties of things represented in the contents.

in the *content* of perception itself, something "lasting and persisting," in which all properties are represented as simultaneous or successive.[37] So we must *perceive* persisting things through outer sense, in which objective accidents and alterations are represented, and this persistence is represented in the content of outer perception itself.[38] It is only because the house persists that we can represent the door and the roof as "simultaneous" or as temporally co-instantiated properties in the house.

Because awareness of our own states *as such*, i.e. as mental states or "subjective experiences," is *always* successive, it is in-principle insufficient for inferring the *objective* time order of the things represented by those states.[39] Kant continues,

> …Only through that which persists does **existence** in different parts of the temporal series acquire a **magnitude**, which one calls **duration**. For in mere sequence alone existence is always disappearance and beginning, and never has the least magnitude. (A183/B226).

While the schema of substance claims that it is by representing the persistence of the real in time that we come to legitimately apply the schema of substance, the First Analogy teaches us that the representation of persistence is "nothing more than *the way in which we represent the existence of things* (in appearance)," (A186/B229, my emphasis). Persistence is the *way* we represent the *existence* of things because only in persistence does *existence* acquire a magnitude. If the

[37] I do not take up issues regarding the unity of time. It is fairly clear that Kant thinks that the persistence of the *quantum* of substance through *all* alterations is a condition on the determinations of appearances in *one* empirical time. In the argument to follow, I only consider the role of local persistence in time-determination and not the question of the relationship between the unity of time and the conservation of matter.

[38] Some commentators have argued that we do not genuinely perceive the *persistent thing* anymore than we perceive the necessary connection of cause and effect. But even if we can't perceive absolute and universal persistence of substance (a capacity which would require, what we might call, a "view from everywhere and always"), we clearly do perceive locally persisting objects, and it is clear from the text – including the second premise of the Refutation -- that Kant thinks that we do.

[39] It is not clear from Allison's reading that he acknowledges the significance of the fact that it is because apprehension is always successive that our awareness of our own states will always be as of them in succession, and so it is *in principle* impossible to know objective temporal properties based on them. The importance of this point arises again in interpreting premise (3).

contents we represent through the states we enjoy had only the successive temporal properties the states themselves have *as states*, then we would never even represent the existence of things at all. Without persistence, "existence is always disappearing and beginning."

So, if persistence is necessary for a thing to have some magnitude of existence, then, Kant's idea is, we will have to appeal to its persistence in *determining* this magnitude, which is to say, in measuring its temporal duration. Michael Friedman is instructive on the question why we must appeal to *space* to represent the temporal properties of things at all. He writes, "In order to view an object as a magnitude," he writes, "we have to view it as a composition of homogeneous [units]."[40, 41] How do we come to represent time as a composition of equal, or homogeneous, units as would be required in the measurement of time, if "time, by itself… cannot support a metric,"?[42] His suggestion is that (for Kant) we construct the concept of equal time units by appeal to inertial rectilinear motion, which can be measured relative to a spatial metric. He writes, "…Equal or congruent temporal intervals are those during which an inertially moving point traverses equal or congruent spatial intervals."[43] Although Friedman's discussion is about how Kant means to "construct" (*a priori*) a mathematical concept of a temporal metric in the first place (for the sake of giving an *a priori* grounding for natural science), the point also applies to how we mean to empirically *determine* the duration of an *objective* time and existence in it. If to have a *concept* of a temporal metric at all requires appeal to an *a priori* spatial metric,

[40] Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences*. Harvard University Press, 1992, 129-130.

[41] I would slightly modify this claim to say that to represent it as a magnitude at all, i.e. as having some indeterminate magnitude, requires that certain conditions must be met such that the thing we represent indeterminately can come to be determinately measured. Actually successively adding the homogeneous units together is required for *determining* the magnitude.

[42] Friedman, (1992), p. 130.

[43] Friedman, (1992), p. 130.

then my application of this temporal metric to measuring the *objective* temporal properties of things that *exist* is, minimally, also going to appeal to a spatial metric.

Now we need to explain how an *a priori* spatial metric (i.e. the *a priori* image of a line) can be applied for the sake of *determining*, i.e. measuring, the objective temporal properties of things that *actually exist*. In the First Analogy, Kant argues that persistence "gives expression" to time. Because we do not directly perceive *actual* time itself, we must use our perception of *actual* persisting things in space, relative to which the motion of things can be represented, in order to represent temporal properties and *actual* temporal durations, as opposed to merely apparent durations. Kant reiterates this point in Note 2 to the Refutation. He writes, "…We perceive all time-determination only through the change in outer relations (motion) relative to that which persists in space…" (B278). So if we can only make sense of the concept of equal intervals of time by imagining the inertial motion of a (mathematical) point over equal intervals of space (i.e. through drawing a timeline in thought), then I can only use this concept and apply this metric to measure intervals of *actual*, *objective* time by appeal to the motion of an actual persisting thing relative to another persisting thing in space.[44]

In the Refutation of Idealism, Kant is clearly trying to apply some aspect of this argument to the question how we are able to determine our own existence in objective time. To see how, let us move to the argument itself. The first two premises of the Refutation are,

(1) I am conscious of *my existence* as determined in time.

(2) All time determination presupposes something **persistent** in perception. (B275, my numbering, my italics.)

[44] My point is only that we use empirical objects in space to fix empirical spaces as frames of reference.

Premise (1) is about the awareness, or consciousness, a subject has of herself with *objective* temporal properties, which either are, or can be, objectively determined.[45] Her awareness is of an existence that, whether or not she has in fact determined its duration, exists or has existed for some stretch of time, which in fact has some, (perhaps as yet undetermined) magnitude. To actually *determine* the duration of this existence, involves applying a temporal metric. Kant's challenge to Descartes is to show how a subject can be conscious of a self that she can possibly determine in time. To put the point another way, what are the conditions for the possibility of being conscious of an objective, time-determinable self? In being aware of herself *as* objective, a subject is aware of a thing that must be time-determinable. In *determining* the objective properties of herself, she orients her existence in the world through time-determination. The "inner experience" that Kant thinks Descartes would want to grant, is an inner experience of an objective, time-determinable self.[46,47]

Premise (2) refers to the Schematism and the results of the First Analogy that we saw above. The claim that "All time determination presupposes something persistent in perception," is based on the claim that a subject's awareness of her own mental states is *always* successive, given the very nature of apprehension and inner sense. Consequently, given that the temporal properties we represent of objects include *simultaneity*, we cannot, *in principle*, determine the

[45] There is a question whether the "consciousness" in question must be itself *determinate*, and so consist in knowledge or correct judgment, or whether it might just be a kind of self-awareness that hasn't yet been determined. As I see it, Kant can offer both kinds of argument, so long as the consciousness is *veridical*. But it seems his Refutation is more effective against Descartes if he is offering the latter. In what follows, I show how Kant has resources to argue that mere veridical consciousness, whether the consciousness is fully determinate or not, of an *objective time-determinable* self, requires certain minimal conditions to obtain. Those conditions just are the minimal conditions for possible time-determination.

[46] Allison agrees with the point about inner experience referring to the determination of a self in a more substantive sense. See Allison, (1983), ch. 14.

[47] So the question is not, contra Dicker, merely relative time order. I think Kant can grant that memory, under the usual circumstances, is sufficient for knowledge of the relative order of ones thoughts. If memory alone is sufficient to recall that "Earlier I saw x," then it is sufficient for the relative time order of at least some of our states.

objective temporal properties of objects through inner sense alone, but must appeal to the persistence of things represented in the contents of our perceptions.

As most readers agree, in the next premise, Kant applies this reasoning to a subject's knowledge of her own objective temporal properties, as an *object* of experience. The disagreement arises in understanding how this application goes. The key and most controversial premise is (3).

> (3) This persistent thing, however, cannot be an intuition in me. For all grounds of determination of my existence that can be encountered in me are representations, and as such require something persistent that is distinct even from them, in relation to which their change, thus my existence in the time in which they change, can be determined. (Bxxxix)

This premise has been read in a variety of ways. If we read "cannot be an intuition in me," as "cannot be *intuited* in me," in the way, for example, Allison suggests, then the claim reiterates Hume's point that I never intuit a persisting thing in myself. If read this way, then the next sentence, "For all grounds of determination of my existence that can be encountered in me are representations," is read as elaborating that same claim. When we introspect, we never find persisting things in ourselves, but rather only fleeting representations. This is, at bottom, an empirical claim.

Yet if we read "cannot be an intuition *in me*" as "cannot be an intuition *through inner sense*," then the passage takes on a new sense. Read in this way, Kant is making a point about the *function* of inner sense, and the very nature of its capacity, which is a point that has *methodological* significance. The persisting thing cannot be an intuition *through inner sense*, or "in me," because inner sense only ever represents representations *as such*, i.e. *as* subjective mental states. Representations as such are the only objects of inner sense. So in being aware of things through inner sense, my representations *refer* to *mere* representations. To put the point

crudely, the persisting thing cannot be an intuition in me, because persisting things are not representations, and, in principle, the only things "in me," or in inner sense, are representations.

To be sure, through inner sense I can represent a *representation* of a persisting thing; I have plenty of those. I can represent, e.g. that "Earlier I saw a house with a blue door." This is a representation about a representation of a persisting thing that I can know, in ordinary circumstances, by memory. Moreover, I can have a persisting representation in my mind, say, a persistent ringing in my ears. But as *mere representations*, their existence, in principle "is *always* ending and beginning." Representations *per se* are mere ways that a thing is presented to me, and my awareness of them *as such* is always successive. We find an elaboration on the point of premise (3) in the footnote to the B Preface, where Kant writes,

> The representation of something persisting in existence is not the same as a persisting representation; for that can be quite variable and changeable, as all our representations are, even the representations of matter, while still being related to something permanent, which must therefore be a thing distinct from all my representations and external, the existence of which is necessarily included in the determination of my own existence (fn Bxli).

Representing persistence is not the same as the persistence of a representing. Even persisting representations, like that of matter, are "variable" and "changeable" ways of being related to "something permanent," which is "distinct from all my representations and external." If I view the persisting object from a different angle or perceive it through a different sense modality, my representation changes. The representations themselves are, if not always *actually* changing, always changeable. My perceptions of the roof and the door are two ways the house is presented and they could have occurred in either order. Representations *in general* are just *ways of*

presenting an object (or property) to a subject. Their variability derives from the fact there can be more than one way for a subject (and, of course, more than one way also across subjects).[48]

Thus we can distinguish two kinds of information based on our two ways of gathering them, i.e. through inner and outer sense. The kind of information we gather merely through inner sense is *of* representations, of the *ways* things are presented *to me*, which as such, are "variable and changeable." Insofar as the particular ways things are presented *to me* may be peculiar to *me* and my subjective position in the world, my representation of them through inner sense is *as of* states *of me*. Information we gather through outer sense, however, is about the things themselves, the things that exist distinct and apart from my representations of them.[49] Kant's point is that, if through the faculty of inner sense we are only aware of representations *per se*, then we cannot determine any *objective* existence, or existence *distinct* from this or that representation *per se*, through inner sense alone.

The claim in premise (3) that "representations… as such require something persistent that is distinct even from them, in relation to which their change, thus my existence in the time in which they change, can be determined," supports this point. There must be some *actual persisting thing*, to which my changing successively apprehended representations refer, if they are to be representations of, or refer to, an object at all. But, second, Kant thinks we must *perceive* this persistence – the persistence must feature in the content of perception – if we are in

[48] The ringing in my ears does not present any object to me, but is merely a persisting illusory representation, and so is still *in me*. It is thus distinct from *representing* the persisting *existence of*, or even a persisting audible property of, a thing in the world. The question about the nature of the contents of illusions is an interesting one, which I do not address here. But I raise the example of a persisting tone again below, when I consider Strawson's Master Sound as a possible objection to the Refutation.

[49] I do not mean this in the transcendent sense, but in terms of the empirical object in space which is to be contrasted with "things in me."

in the business of *determining* objective temporal properties, whether of the thing represented, or of *myself* as the thing representing it.

In the footnote to the B Preface, Kant instructs the reader to consider premise (3) in the wording in which we have been considering it and not as it is printed in the context of the Refutation itself. Kant was unhappy with the original premise, but had, apparently, already sent that portion off to the printers. The original sentence reads, "This persisting thing, however, cannot be *something* in me, since my own existence in time can first be determined only through this persistent thing," (B275). Of course this premise is a little too "quick," so Kant replaced it with the one analyzed above. But it supports the reading I've been sketching. The persisting thing cannot be *something* in me, because the things in me are representations, and as such, are always *variable* and *changeable*. If "in succession, existence is always ending and beginning," states which are in principle variable and changeable can never be called upon to determine the existence of anything apart from them. And no one would ever say, "I am a representation." [50]

To put the point of premise (3) another way, in making an objective time determination, I must perceive data to which I can apply the schema for the category of substance, the persistence of the real in time. It is true that I never *in fact* find this kind of data in myself, but it is also true that, *in principle*, I *could not*, because of the nature of the structure of inner sense, and of apprehension. Inner sense provides one kind of data, information about which mental states we've enjoyed, while outer sense provides another. As we will see in premise (4), Kant

[50] This might be a way of reading Hume's view on the matter. See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Courier Dover Publications, 2003, section 6, part IV, book 1. But Kant and Descartes would certainly not want to say this. Kant offers a more plausible alternative to Hume's view in his discussion of apperception and its relation to cognition in the Transcendental Deduction. See (B132-36). For one way of reading Kant's reply to Hume on personal identity, see Kitcher, (1982), 102-16.

thinks that, to determine my own existence in time, or through any duration of time, I must apply the schema of persistence to something else.

> (4) Thus the perception of this persistent thing is possible only through a **thing** outside me and not through the mere **representation** of a thing outside me. (B275)

If premise (3) tells us that we cannot gather the relevant data to apply the schema of persistence from inner sense, premise (4) argues by exclusion that it must come from outer sense. The premise is about the source of the content that represents things *as a persisting existence*. Inner sense only provides information about representations, and their existence is always variable, because they are mere ways of representing other things. So, only if the source is *outer sense*, is the necessary content gathered, and the schema of persistence correctly applied.[51] Given the faculties we have, the only way we can come to perceive the persistence of things is by apprehending them *immediately* through outer sense.[52]

Historically there have been two general camps for reading premise (4), which are useful to distinguish. The first attributes to Kant the following relatively weaker claim:

> (REPRESENTATION): The *representation* of persisting things is possible only through outer sense.

Although Kant clearly endorses this position as part of his view, (REPRESENTATION) isn't sufficient for even putatively replying to the skeptic. (REPRESENTATION) claims that the representation of things in space is merely an indispensable ingredient in representing my own existence. The obvious problem with this reading of premise (4) is that it only reveals certain

[51] We saw in chapter 1 that applying the schemata, including the schema of persistence, is required to solve the "object problem."

[52] Notice that this is also an inference to the only way via argument by exclusion. But, unlike Dicker's reconstruction, it is about *abilities* not about *possible justifiers*. It is still based on empirical claims about the mind (i.e., that we have no intellectual intuition), so it is still not a necessary truth.

relations among elements in our conceptual, or representational, scheme. *If* we are to represent our own existence in time, we must at least *represent* things in space through outer sense.

The second camp attributes to Kant a much stronger claim:

> (EXTERNAL NOUMENA): The perception of the persisting thing is possible only if things exist external to our minds, *in themselves*, i.e. as noumena.[53]

According to this reading, Kant is arguing that the existence of things in themselves is a condition on perception of persisting things.[54] This reading cannot possibly be right. We cannot ever know the existence or non-existence of things in themselves (see chapter 3 for further discussion). Moreover, the reading flies in the face of Kant's initial treatment of Cartesian idealism in the A edition Fourth Paralogism, where he argues that the *mistake* of Cartesian idealism is to confuse the empirical sense of "things outside of me," which refers to objects outside of me in space, with the noumenal sense.[55]

My reading falls between these two traditional accounts. I think Kant is genuinely interested in showing that outer sense puts us in immediate contact with things *that exist* in space. These things are real and really spatial, and so exist, therefore, external to inner sense, and external to our minds. We can call these *empirical objects*. Not only are they real, they are the only aspect of reality, to which we have theoretical access.[56]

If a putative perception of a persisting thing, a mere representation, is only possible through outer sense – as (REPRESENTATION) claims – then a *genuine*, i.e. veridical, perception is

---

[53] Thanks to Michael Rohlf for his suggestion of dividing the received interpretations of the Refutation into these two camps. He gave me extremely helpful comments on an earlier and quite different version of this chapter which I presented at the APA Eastern, 2012.

[54] Paul Guyer thinks Kant is on his way to this kind of transcendental realism. See Guyer, (1987), chs. 14 & 15

[55] I say more about the Fourth Paralogism in section 4 below.

[56] I say more about the distinction between empirical objects, which are appearances, and things in themselves in chapter 3.

only possible through outer sense as well. If the determination of my own existence in actual objective time requires applying a temporal metric that depends on the persisting existence of objects in space outside of me, then this determination only counts as knowledge, or is only a *correct* determination, if the justifier is also true, i.e. if the things in space outside of and distinct from me actually exist. Otherwise, I am mistakenly referring only to my own *mere* representations, which as such, are always changing and variable. In this mistaken case I do not in fact have *knowledge* of my existence.

I have not yet said how the determination of the self *works*. Unfortunately, Kant does not spell this out in the context of the Refutation. What's worse, he makes several claims in the Paralogisms that have led some scholars to believe that Kant rejects the phenomenal self altogether.[57] One plausible option, given Kant's claims in the Transcendental Deduction, is that I can determine, in the strong sense, my own existence through empirical time *by determining* the duration of the existence of things in space through objective time, and then knowing that I am the thing determining them. Roughly, the self *objectively determines* itself by knowing itself *as* a knower of objective things. In the Transcendental Deduction, Kant argues for a similar model for the identity of the *thinker*.[58] I know my own identity through a series of mere thoughts, by being aware that I am the one synthesizing the concepts by thinking them. For example I know the identity of myself through a rational inference, "If P, then Q, P, therefore" by synthesizing the premises, deriving the conclusion, and knowing that I am the mental agent who performed this action. Similarly, I can determine the *objective* duration of my *objective*

[57] For example, he argues that we cannot know the substantiality of the self.

[58] Of course the thinker and the knower are the same subject. My point here is only that for a subject to objectively determine her existence as an objective thing *in time* requires the extra condition of appeal to external persisting things, which allows her to determine herself as a knower.

existence through time, by determining the duration of the *existence* of objects in space and time, and then knowing that I've existed, as the one doing the determining, (at least) as long as the duration I've measured in the object. To truly represent myself *objectively* as a time-determinable self, requires representing myself as a knower of the things that I determine in space. Premise (5) is,

> (5) Consequently, the determination of my existence in time is possible only by means of the existence of actual things that I perceive outside myself. (B275-6)

Premise (5) gets us the conclusion, which is a *conditional* one. If it is only in representing persistence that I can determine my existence in time, say through some duration, and, if I can only represent persistence through outer sense, then the conditional conclusion in (5) follows; namely *if I can* correctly determine the duration of my existence in objective time, *then* the persisting things in space that I use (or *would* use) to determine objective time *must* exist. If they did not, then the time in which I represented the duration of my own existence would not itself be *objective*.

> (6) Now consciousness in time is necessarily combined with the consciousness of the possibility of this time-determination: Therefore it is also necessarily combined with the existence of the things outside me, as the condition of time-determination; i.e., the consciousness of my own existence is at the same time an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside me. (B276)

It might seem that in premise (6) Kant is making unnecessary claims about the contents of our conscious experience. Is consciousness *in* time *also* consciousness *of* the possibility of time-determination? If we are talking merely about the contents of thoughts like, "Earlier I thought x, and now I think y," then it seems implausible to insist that this thought is at the same time *about* objects in space. I think Kant is up to something else. More charitably, premise (6) can be read as claiming that, *if* I've genuinely represented my existence *as* an objective thing in time, then I've represented myself as *time-determinable*. But, if I've veridically represented

myself as time-determinable, i.e. as a real thing the existence of which *can be* correctly determined objectively in time, then the minimal necessary conditions for time determination must obtain. Those conditions are (1) the things I perceive outside myself in space must exist (to be called upon for applying the temporal metric), and (2) I must be a knower of, i.e. have the capacity for knowledge of, these things.

Let's spell this out. Kant does not really need to say that the subject *must temporally determine* objects in order to represent her own objective existence. She only needs to *actually* determine the objects when she is *actually* determining her own temporal duration. Rather, Kant needs only to say that to *truly*, or *veridically*, represent herself *as objective in time*, the existence she represents *must be* time-determinable, and *she* must be able to determine it. For this the above two minimal conditions of time-determinability must obtain.

From the point of view of epistemology, premise (6) is also about how Kant's argument is meant to speak to Cartesian skepticism at all. In (6) Kant is spelling out how he is entitled to appeal to our ability to have a certain sophisticated kind of empirical knowledge of ourselves as a reply to the bare bones of the *cogito*. The conditional nature of the conclusion in (5) is relevant to this point as well. Kant's point is that the conditions for *correctly* determining the duration of my existence in time, depend on the conditions for correctly determining empirical *times*, which (if the Schematism is right) in turn depends on the conditions for the correct representation of the persistence of objects. The schema of persistence is only correctly applied when the relevant temporal relations are genuinely and veridically perceived, and so actually exist. There is thus an ascension of conditions, from the less sophisticated capacity to perceive objects in space, to the capacity to determine their objective temporal positions, to the capacity to determine my own temporal position as a knower of objective temporal positions. The conditions for the lower

abilities must obtain if the more sophisticated cognitive abilities are to be possible. So Kant's claim that "My consciousness of my own existence is *at the same time* an immediate consciousness of the existence of other things outside of me," is explained by the reading that to representing myself *objectively* in time is to represent myself as a knower of the things that I perceive in space.

The conditional nature of the conclusion also means that Kant entertained the possibility that the consequent might be false, in which case the antecedent would be as well. If the objects I would use to determine my existence are not real, then my application of the schema of persistence to them would be incorrect. If the minimal conditions for time determination were not met, then the representation of myself as time-determinable would be false, or non-veridical. So my representation of myself as objective in time would also be false. We can put the point in terms of *actual* time-determination as well. If the persisting things I use to determine myself in time are themselves mere illusions, then the judgments I make about my own existence and the time in which I exist, do not count as knowledge.[59] So, if I am being cognitively tortured by an all-powerful evil deceiver, then there is no possibility of correctly applying the schema of persistence, of determining my own existence in time, or determining the time in which I exist.

Ironically, as it turns out, Kant's real point against the skeptic is a skeptical one. The *determinate* knowledge we have of the duration of our consciousness, i.e., *inner experience*, is *no better off* than the knowledge we have of the existence of objects, i.e. *outer experience*. He

[59] I put the point in terms of knowledge rather than in terms of truth to admit the possibility of Gettier type scenarios. If I were a brain in vat, I could use a clock to make justified judgments about the duration of my existence. The clock might actually be synched up to real clocks in the external world. In this case, my judgment about the duration of my existence would be both true and justified, but the justifier of my judgment (i.e. my perception of the clock) is not hooked up to the reality of things as it would normally be. If we still have the intuition that this case delivers knowledge, because, say, of the intentions of those who programmed the vat to keep actual time, we can easily build additional complicating features into the scenario (e.g. that the vat programmers included a randomizer in the clock program and it just so happens that, at the time when I "look" at the clock, it corresponds to the time in the real world).

writes, "I am just as certainly conscious that there are things outside me to which my sensibility relates, as I am conscious that I myself exist determined in time," (Bxli). This is a claim about the relative *certainty* of the representations of objects known through inner and outer sense. But things could still go very wrong; they would just go wrong altogether. If everything were to go really wrong, then the apparent time-determinable *self* that I seem to represent, is not an *objective* thing at all, but a mere illusion.

Although he has not provided an unconditional refutation of skepticism, I will explain in section 4 how Kant's Refutation still advances the debate about skepticism. But first consider a more concise reconstruction:

(1) I can veridically determine the temporal duration of my existence through at least a part of time. (Cartesian premise)
(2) If (1), then I can correctly determine the part of time in which my existence can be determined.
(3) I can correctly determine the part of time in which my existence can be determined. (From 1 and 2).
(4) If (3), then I have correctly applied the schema of persistence in the perception of objects in space (The requirement on correct empirical determinations of time from the Schematism and the First Analogy).
(5) I have correctly applied the schema of persistence in the perception of objects in space.
(6) If (5), then I have veridically perceived the persistence of external objects (from the Schematism).
(7) I have veridically perceived the persistence of external objects. (From 5 and 6)
(8) If (7), then external object exist.
(9) External objects exist. (From 7 and 8)[60]

The Refutation argues that self-awareness *can* only become full-blooded self-*experience*, which determines the objective temporal properties of the *existence* of the self, if objects in space exist to which I can appeal to make this determination. Genuine possession of the mere *ability* depends on the existence of external objects. The argument trades on our, and Descartes',

[60] One might object that this only shows that external objects exist whenever I determine time, and not that they exist in the interim. But this argument depends on the model claim that "I can" determine my own existence through time. *Whenever* I can do this, then there is no room for this objection.

unwillingness to give up this particular kind of theoretical knowledge of ourselves, a kind which Kant argues (against Descartes) is really an empirical kind. A radical skeptic, on the other hand, might be perfectly happy to throw the baby out with the bath water, and then doubt whether either of them ever existed.

This objection, call it the objection from *Extreme Skepticism*, cannot, according to Kant, be fully answered in the way the skeptic would want. Nevertheless, in section 4, I argue that Kant has systematic reasons, derived from his own transcendental idealism, for thinking that the reason we human cognitive subjects cannot answer *Extreme Skepticism* in the way the skeptic would want, is that radical skepticism is not a well-posed question for theoretical philosophy. So not only can we not answer it, we should not even try. Before considering a possible *dissolution* of the objection from *Extreme Skepticism*, however, there are some other possible objections to the argument we should consider directly.

3.1 Objections

> (*PERSISTENCE IS UNNECESSARY)* If I can refer to myself through first person thought, and be aware of my states *as my states* and as succeeding each other through inner sense, then why are these two capacities insufficient for *determining* my existence through the duration of this sequence? Why do we need anything else to know that there is a self that has existed for some as yet indeterminate duration of time? [61]

[61] In a recent paper, Christopher Peacocke defends Descartes from Kant's attack in the Third Paralogism on grounds similar to those on which this objection is based. See Peacocke, "First Person Illusions: Are they Descartes', or Kant's?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 26.1 (2012): 247-275. The defense is based on the claim that Kant confuses the level of sense with the level of reference, as Frege would distinguish them. The idea is that, if "I" refers to the author of the thinking (or the thinker of the thought) and the author (the referent) is *in fact* a persisting thing, then the subject need not *perceive* any "persisting thing" in order to correctly represent herself. If the subject possesses the first person concept and her memory is working properly, then she can infer that she has persisted through her thoughts on these grounds alone, even though she has no intuition or perception of her own persistence. Peacocke charges Kant with making a mistaken demand on self-knowledge, according to which we must *perceive* persistence in order to know the persistence of a self. He cites Beatrice Longuenesse's interpretation of Kant, who understands the "formal" nature of the "I think" in terms of the "I" *not referring* to a persisting thing. As I read him, Kant does *not* think that the "I think" is empty in this sense. (See the Introduction). Of course the first person concept refers; it refers to the thinker. Kant explicitly grants the Cartesian insight that in the thought "I think," the "existence" of the

In the Transcendental Deduction Kant argues that the unity of apperception, or the identity of the thinker, is a presupposition of cognition. For example, it is a condition on inferring, "If P, then Q, P, therefore Q," that the thinker who thinks the conclusion "therefore Q" is the same thinker that thinks through the other two steps of the inference. Without the unity of apperception, or the sameness of the mental agent through the thinking, no inference at all could be performed. Moreover, a subject only comes to be aware of this sameness, in being aware of the duration of her mental action in performing the inference. So Kant grants that the sameness of the subject through mental states is a condition on cognition. All representations that I enjoy through inner sense are subject to the transcendental unity of apperception. Every thought and perception of which I can be conscious as such (which are the ones that can be anything for me (B132)), are simply, by my being conscious of them as states, unified through apperception. For example, if I can enjoy the thoughts "x" and "y," in sequential order I can judge, "Earlier I thought x, then I thought y." Kant thinks that the possibility of apperception is a structural feature of consciousness. So to reiterate the question in an even stronger way, if Kant grants that

---

subject, i.e. the referent, is given. Rather, Kant is interested in whether through possession of the first person concept *alone*, we can derive philosophical conclusions about the *kind* of thing (or substance) the self is. This is an attack on the Cartesian methodology. Arguably, Kant's attack on Descartes *foreshadows* the distinction between sense and reference. We do not know what kind of thing a thinker or "author" is merely by knowing that the first person concept refers to it. We do not know whether it is a body, brain, psychological system, or even mental substance. Kant's point in the Third Paralogism is that, if we are to hold *subjects* accountable *as persons*, we need to know what kind of thing the *person* is and what its identity conditions are. Kant's objection to the rational psychologist is that we cannot do this through the first-person way of thinking alone. See, for example, Kitcher, (2011).

Peacocke further argues that Kant's empiricism overreaches in requiring a *perception* of persistence as grounds for judging the persistence of the self. If we can know that A at T1 is the same thinker as B at T2 through possession of the first person concept and memory alone, then why do we need the perception of persistence at all? As I read him, in the Refutation, Kant is claiming that we need the perception of persistence to get beyond merely apparent relative time order, i.e. in order to determine *objective* temporal properties. So, to infer an *objective* duration of my existence through time from our knowledge of the sameness of thinker, we have to also know that the thinker (the referent) is a certain kind of thing, namely a *knower* of objective things in space that persist through time. Only in this was does the subject come to have a genuinely scientific view of her own existence in objective time.

the unity of apperception is a condition on cognition, why do we need anything else to *determine* our existence *in time*?

Even if, as Kant and Descartes agree, through thinking the thought, "I think," my *indeterminate* existence is given, and even if I can know that "I" at T_1 is the same thinker as "I" at T_2 simply by enjoying certain conscious states and becoming self-conscious of them, I still have not represented myself as a determinate empirical self in *objective* time, because I have not applied the schema of persistence to determine *actual* time. The objector might press, "If I refer to this same self through the first person way of thinking and I can know the sameness of myself through the unity of apperception, then I can *infer* the persistence of myself." There are a couple of points to make.

First, there are conceivable scenarios that raise problems for the sufficiency of the numerical identity of the thinking subject for judging the objective persistence of the self. Just as we can imagine that the contents of our minds could now be transferred from one body to another, so we can imagine that they could be transferred to a body that might live in the year 2513. Suppose the entirety of my mind's contents is downloaded to a flash drive and just put in a desk drawer somewhere and forgotten about. Five hundred years later, someone finds the flash drive and is able to transfer the contents into a new brain, with the same cognitive capacities. In such a scenario K at T_1 would be the *same* subject as G at T_{500}, but there would be a great deal of "down time," so to speak, between the mental lives of K and G. No thinking would occur during this down time. The concept of a persisting self does *not* seem to apply, although sameness of thinking subject clearly applies.[62]

[62] This claim is supported by Kant's point in the B edition 4th Paralogism, where he writes, "I distinguish my own existence, that of a thinking being, from other things outside me (to which my body also belongs)…for **other** things are those that I think of as **distinguished** from me. But I do not thereby know at all whether this consciousness of

We might want to say "What a horrible circumstance!" and insist that, luckily, in normal circumstances, the inference from sameness to persistence goes through. Yet normal circumstances just are those circumstances in which I have regular sensory access to a temporally contiguous, objective, and spatial world. They are circumstances in which I have continual access through outer sense to both my living human body and to objects in my environment. I can know the duration of my existence as a time-determinable self from today until tomorrow by appeal to the things I've experienced through that contiguous time and knowing that I've experienced them. Similarly, I can know that there was a gap in my existence in the thought experiment above, because there is a gap in my access to the things in the world.

While the sameness of the thinker is a prerequisite for knowledge, the thinker only becomes a time-determinable self, when she becomes a self-conscious *knower* of objective things in objective time. To put the point another way, Kant's complete doctrine of transcendental apperception attributes to the subject more than the mere identity of thought, or even the identity of the rational mental agent. If we grant that some of the thinker's states constitute *determinate* knowledge, then the thinker becomes a knower of objective things. If she can be self-consciously aware of herself as a knower of particular objective things – particular empirical states of affairs – then she knows herself as a time-determinable self.[63] Most fundamentally, Kant is challenging Descartes, and rational psychology in general, to explain how we can come to be conscious of our selves, not merely as thinking subjects, but as objective

---

myself would even be possible without things outside me through which representations are given to me, and thus whether I could exist mere as a thinking being (without being a human being) (B409).

[63] Kant may mean to build this into his very idea of apperception, although it clearly also requires inner sense. It is the kind of self that emerges from the cooperation of both faculties for the end of objective, theoretical, and scientific knowledge.

things in the world. To the extent that Descartes thinks our knowledge of ourselves is to play a foundational role in philosophy he cannot simply rest content with the "I think."[64]

Perhaps one of Kant's insights in the Refutation is that, to treat skepticism, we must appeal to the conditions for representing the self from an objective point of view, as part of an integrated, unified, and systematic knowledge, or as Kant puts it, as part of the "one experience," (A110). So, although Kant agrees that through the first person we refer to ourselves as thinkers, he thinks that determining ourselves *as we exist in objective time*, requires determining ourselves as *knowers* of objective temporal matters. To attempt to derive objective properties of ourselves through the first person concept alone – as is the project of rational psychology – is a hopeless endeavor. Now consider a second objection.

> (*SENSORY DEPRIVATION*): I could shut myself into a sensory deprivation chamber, and still know that I've existed through my awareness of my thinking. So the perception of persistence is not required to know that I've existed through my thoughts.

At this point we can see just why Kant can grant this. He can grant that a subject can be aware of the identity of her own thinking through thinking alone. As we saw above, he argues that the capacity to be aware of the identity of one's states is built into the structure of consciousness, so that when we are conscious of something, we are entitled to self-ascribe it. He can even grant the *relative* apparent order of the thoughts, the order in which the thoughts have occurred to me, or have been apprehended. What he would deny is that a subject could have full-blown knowledge of her self *as objective* through this thinking alone. She cannot determine through this thinking, for example, how long she's been thinking. This kind of knowledge requires appeal to objects in space.

[64] He must show that the subject to which the "I think" refers in each self-conscious act is an *objective* and time-determinable thing in the world.

(*STRAWSON'S MASTER SOUND*): Imagine that there is a persisting tone that increases in pitch throughout your life. Couldn't you use that persisting tone as a backdrop for measuring the duration of your existence through your thoughts? You could judge that your thought began at an A and concluded at a G. If the Master Sound is possible, then the perception of objects in space is not necessary for determining your existence through time.

This objection has been raised to a number of different reconstructions of the Refutation.[65] Yet it seems to me that Kant has some ready-to-hand resources for addressing it. Kant could grant that the subject can use the master sound to judge *that* she existed from an A to a G, from one *subjective* state to the next, but she could and would still need to be able to determine the time between an A and a G. Recall Kant's claim that "The representation of something persisting in existence is not the same as a persisting representation," (Bxli). The master sound is a persisting representation, and so my awareness of it, *qua* mere representation, would never be sufficient for determining objective properties. Of course, I could be confused about the objectivity of the master sound and come to believe that it is not a mere representation. But in that case, I would be confusing a mere mental state, which is always variable and changeable, for a state of the world. So the determinations I made on the basis of it could not constitute knowledge.[66]

The problem is that, insofar as the master sound is merely a persisting representation, we must tell a story about how to determine the objective temporal properties of *it*. The determination of time requires successively adding together time represented as homogeneous *quanta*. To use the master sound as a clock, the subject would have to represent the changes of pitch as *quanta*, or homogenous magnitudes. But how would she determine their homogeneity

[65] The original "Master Sound" thought experiment is from Strawson's *Individuals*, Routledge, 1959/2005.

[66] Kant's answer to the master sound would appeal to the nature of representations. Representations are ways that the object is presented to the subject (whether through perception or through thought). As such they are *in-principle* variable and changeable, even if they in fact persist throughout our mental lives.

as *magnitudes*? She can't simply assume it without also assuming an innate ability to measure time (which Kant would not allow). It seems the changes in pitch could only be represented as homogeneous units if the subject *measured their durations*. Yet this, of course, is going to require appeal to a spatial metric. As we saw above, to determine time durations as objective, requires more than a mere *a priori* metric (like a time line). It requires *actual* persisting things. The subject could therefore use the master sound as a clock, the way we use clocks as clocks, but only if she's made it into a keeper of objective time.

It is worth noting – as others have -- that Dicker's reconstruction has more trouble with the master sound.[67] If the goal is merely to determine the *relative* order of our mental states, then, if there were a master sound, it would be useful for this purpose.

In the next section I return to the worry about the success of the Refutation for replying to *Extreme Skepticism*. As we will see, Kant may have some reasons for thinking that, once we transform Cartesian skepticism into *Extreme Skepticism*, the question no longer falls within the purview of theoretical reason.

Section 4: Dialectical Skepticism from a Noumenal Point of View.

Imagine you awake to find that you are hooked up to a room full of computers. You have wires running in and out of your head and tubes of various sorts running in and out of the rest of your body, feeding it and keeping it alive. When you wake up, you are completely disoriented. You come to realize that you have no idea what year it is, or even, for that matter, how old you are. But as you gain your wits, you begin to put the pieces together. You've been a brain (and body) in a vat.

[67] See Chignell, (2010), p.494.

One of Kant's insights in the Refutation is that the only way we can come to discover that illusions are illusory is by appeal to the consistency of certain putative perceptions with the entirety of experience, its conditions (the categories, space, and time), and our empirical laws, (B279). The way a subject comes to discover that the stick that appears to be bent in the water is not actually bent is by empirical investigation. Similarly, the way you would come to know you had been a brain in a vat and that all of your appearances had been illusory is by waking up, and investigating your surroundings.[68]

Now imagine that at some point after waking up, you, all of a sudden, wake up again. You find yourself in another room full of computers, wires running in and out of your head. You are completely disoriented. The good news is that this time it takes you less time to gather that, you had just been trapped in another layer of illusion. The bad news is that you've begun to doubt that your experience *now* is veridical, i.e. that you *have* woken up. There is no guarantee that the world in which you now find yourself is not yet another fantasy, from which you might awake in the apparent tomorrow, or sometime in the apparent future. You have no idea how many times you could wake up to find that the world you thought you knew was merely an illusion. The fact that experience in the past has failed you now makes you doubt whether you can trust your current experience. What's worse, if the Refutation is right, you can't even be sure that the self, the knower, you take yourself to have been is the self you thought you were. You can't even be sure about the time you are experiencing. Days might seem to pass, but it all could be occurring in the blink of an eye. Now you are in the context of *Extreme Skepticism*.

[68] Of course you could know this in other ways, e.g. testimony. In the film, *The Matrix*, the character Neo has been told that he is trapped in an illusion prior to waking up from it. So *maybe* he knows he is trapped before waking up. Yet even in the film itself, Neo chooses the red pill because he *wants to know* by experience. I only mention this in case there are worries about my making claims about "the only way" we can know that we can discover that we've been in a vat is by experience. But, of course, the justification of the testimony in such a case would depend on the experience of the one reporting.

This is a tragic story. It would be morally tragic if a person were to find herself in such a horrifying situation. But it would also be epistemologically tragic if the world were to force an otherwise well-functioning mind to call into doubt her own best lights. This scenario brings out, however, that, in the throes of *Extreme Skepticism*, the subject is no longer satisfied with her own *human* capacity for knowledge, but has begun to long for some other way of knowing. If she doubts the very reliability of her capacity for experiential knowledge on the grounds of the thought that whatever world she experientially finds herself in might be just another illusory world, *ad infinitum*, she has begun to treat her condition and the world around her, *as if* there is some other way of knowing them from which she and her cognitive faculties are barred. She imagines that there could be a perspective on her own situation beyond experience, a perspective that would make right the epistemological tragedy that has befallen her. We might call this longing, the demand for noumenal knowledge. In making the transition from using experience to inquire into her surroundings to doubting her capacity for experience at all, she has made a transcendental slide from viewing empirical objects as possible epistemological opportunities to viewing them not as objects at all, but as *possible* illusions, behind which there are noumenal facts of the matter. Her theoretical doubts about whether she has ever really had experience at all have seeped into the way she experiences the things around her.[69]

The slide into the noumenal point of view on empirical objects, according to Kant, is a kind of *mistake.* The mistake resides in the subject's calling into question her own cognitive capacities, as if there were others that she could possibly enjoy. The source of the problem in the extreme skeptical scenario is not with the subject or her mind at all, but with the world way the world is.

[69] It is rather difficult to imagine this situation ourselves. A subject in this situation would likely just cognitively give up and go mad.

In the end, Kant's Refutation cannot undermine this kind of extreme skepticism in the way the extreme skeptic, the subject trapped in the layers of illusion, would want. Even if the argument is sound, it shows only that inner experience is possible only under the presupposition of outer experience, and not that either is *actual*. Kant more or less acknowledges this in a number of places.

In Note 3 to the Refutation Kant makes the claim that we can only come to ascertain that illusions are illusory by comparing them with the rest of experience (B279).[70] He admits, in the B Preface, that this point merely assumes the actuality of experience (Bxxxix-Bxl). He grants this point again, later in the footnote to the Refutation, where he claims that his only aim was to show that inner experience presupposes outer experience, even if we have no insight into the possibility of outer sense (fn B 276). The only explanation he gives of the possibility of outer sense is, from the point of view of extreme skepticism, a lame appeal to the receptive nature of sensibility. Roughly, he argues that, if sensibility must receive the data that imagination subsequently and spontaneously works over, then sensibility cannot be reduced to mere imagination (fn. B276-7). The appeal falls flat as a reply to skepticism, of course, because a vat or an evil deceiver could be affecting our sensibility and causing illusions.

From all of this, the message we should take home is twofold: First, Kant's Refutation has more force against the Cartesian optimistic skeptic than the *Extreme Skeptic*. The Cartesian optimist would say that we can know something determinate about the subject through inner experience. The point against the Cartesian optimist, at bottom, is only to show that outer sense is *immediate*, "whether we have insight into the possibility of this consciousness or not," (fn

[70] See also A376 for this claim.

B276-7). If we know anything determinately at all, we know it by experience, and all experience, whether inner or outer, depends on outer sense.

Second, although the appeal to the receptivity of outer sense is lame from the extreme skeptical point of view it is not philosophically uninteresting. It is actually indicative of Kant's methodological pivot in treating skepticism. Outer perception is receptive and *immediate*, so perception as a faculty *is* sufficient for judging actuality. The problem of skepticism is not at all a problem with the faculty of perception. There does not need to be any kind of fallible inference from our awareness of an inner perception to the existence of the object that caused it. Existence is given in an immediate way through the outer perception. Rather the real skeptical problem, which the Refutation brings to light, is that perception is not reflexively self-verifying. Although I can *know* by experience that there is a cup on the table, I cannot know by this very experience that I have enjoyed genuine experience and not mere illusion.[71]

This point is significant for the following reason: It means that the skeptical scenario does not suggest that perception *per se* is insufficient for actuality, but only that putative perception, *considered as such*, is insufficient. It is only upon waking up a number of times that the subject in the skeptical scenario calls into doubt whether her current experience is veridical. If experience did not usually put her in touch with the way things are, it could not be drawn on to raise doubts about how things might be *now*. Her doubt is not about whether perception is sufficient for telling her how things are, but whether, now, given the failure of recent appearances, she is actually enjoying perception at all. In this way, Kant rejects the Cartesian skeptical argument as an argument against the sufficiency of perception for judgments of actuality.

[71] For a contemporary argument an account of perception as a factive state is explanatorily prior to an account of perception as a putative state, see Peacocke, *The Realm of Reason*, Oxford University Press, 2004.

To my knowledge, Kant does not ever consider this version of the skeptical scenario – although it bears affinities with Descartes' dream argument in the *Meditations*.[72] Descartes refers to dreams in which the question whether one is dreaming comes up, and so appeals to the higher iteration of illusion as this scenario does. The difference, of course, is that in the *Extreme* scenario, an *actual defeater* of the ordinary justification we gain from experience is present, and it is not in the dream case. The defeater, of course, is your putative experience of having woken up to find yourself in a vat. Ordinarily, perception is sufficient for actuality, but in a world in which you've woken up to find yourself trapped in a vat, your putative experiences of waking up in part ground the inference that, perhaps *now*, you might not be enjoying experience either. The experience of having woken up thereby defeats the "reason" or justification your perception ordinarily affords you.[73]

Although Kant cannot answer it on its own terms – i.e., he cannot argue that we are not or could not be subject to such a scenario – he nevertheless has some resources left, which derive from transcendental idealism, for treating it. In explaining the natural illusion into which reason falls in positing a "most real being," Kant argues that reason naturally, but mistakenly, seeks a transcendent and wholly unconditioned ground for the empirical regress of our experience of things in the world. Reason has an "interest" in the completion of the conditions of things, or for finding a final, all-encompassing, and highest ground for things. The argument that there must be a most real being that (or who) sustains the contingent existence of everything else, Kant says,

[72] Descartes, (1984), p. 13

[73] Although I cannot argue the point here, it seems to me that showing that perception is sufficient for judgments of actuality also shows that in Descartes' dream case, the fact that I, in the indeterminate past, have had dreams from which I have seem to have woken only to later infer that I was still dreaming does not afford the same kind of defeater. If, in the context of meditation, Descartes has already returned to, for lack of a better phrase, a normal state of cognitive operation, he has integrated that past experience of having had a dream into his overall objective experience of the world and himself. I do not have space here to give Descartes his due attention, so I postpone this question for another time.

is a mistake that reason makes in attempting to fulfill its own need. It is a mistake because it transgresses the possibility of experience. Conversely, it is also a mistake to claim that everything that exists is *absolutely* contingent and so there is no most real being. In either case, we ask for knowledge of the way things are *as such*, in themselves, or as they might be independently of our capacity to know them. To posit a most real being, or to know that things are absolutely contingent requires having a perspective on the world from outside the regress of experience. This aspect of reality is therefore off limits to minds like ours (A579-83/B607-11).

Similarly, the scenario of extreme skepticism generates a desire to know what the world is like outside the regress of experience. Of course the problem, in this case, is not the positing of a being beyond experience to explain the apparent contingent nature of the things we do experience, but rather the positing of a kind of knowledge, or point of view, outside experience that can tell us whether our putative experience, viewed under the shadow of global skepticism, is getting anything right at all. To raise suspicion about whether our best and only conceivable means for getting at the reality of things is *actually* getting at the way things are is to blindly step outside of the domain of our best means and plead for better and different means. It is to think that there is a kind of knowledge of the way things are independently of the way it is when *we human mental agents* are cognitively related to it. The epistemological tragedy of the scenario of extreme skepticism is thereby compounded: for now the subject demands a kind of knowledge that her mind cannot possibly enjoy. She is asking to know things in the way God would know them, and so to be a kind of mind that she could never be.

Kant's treatment of skepticism in the A "Fourth Paralogism" also appeals to the distinction between the empirical and the noumenal. Kant defines a paralogism as a mistake in inference based on form (A341/B399). It occurs when one and the same term is used in two

different senses in the major and minor premises of the inference. In the "Paralogisms" chapter, Kant outlines the inference that he thinks is responsible for generating Cartesian doubt about external objects. There the term on which the equivocation occurs is "existence." Kant distinguishes two ways something can exist outside of me, one which is "empirical" and refers to things that *exist outside of me in space*, and one which is "intellectual" and refers to *things as they exist in themselves*, as they might exist independently of my ability to know them. The mistake of the idealist, according to Kant is to conflate the two senses of "existence," in the following inference:

> (1) That whose existence [as thing outside of me in space] can only be inferred as a cause of given perceptions has only a doubtful existence [as thing outside of me in space].[74]
> (2) Now all outer appearances are of this kind: their existence [as things in themselves] cannot be immediately perceived, but can be inferred only as the cause of given perceptions:
> (3) Thus the existence of all objects of outer sense [i.e. of things outside of me in space] is doubtful. (A367, brackets added to show the equivocation.)

The idea is that Cartesian doubt about the *existence*, or actuality, of external objects in space only arises when we come to treat the objects of outer sense as things in themselves as premise (2) does. If we demand of our perceptions of objects in space that they deliver information about how objects might be independently of our way of perceiving them, then we generate (legitimate) doubt about the capacity of perception to do this. Here Kant is arguing that outer sense *can* teach us about the way objects in space really are, but it cannot teach us the way things in themselves are, if there are such ways, independently of our capacity for experiencing them. Thus the *empirical* causes of our perceptions are not, *just as such*, doubtful – we can empirically observe and study them and even develop sciences of perception. But if we expect

[74] E.g. I infer that the cause of the chirping noise that I hear is a bird outside my window, but, in reality, my neighbor has a terrible bird-like ringtone on her cell phone.

that perception should give us a kind of information about things as they might be in themselves, then, Kant thinks, we expect too much.

To make obvious his pivot in the skeptical debate, Kant could have put this point differently. Perception is the best means for getting at the existence of things. But we come to doubt the sufficiency of outer sense only when we demand that it also deliver information about whether or not we are actually *enjoying* perception. Although outer sense cannot possibly teach us *this*, it is still a receptive faculty that puts us in immediate contact with the existence of things, and our best means of knowing the way the world is.

There is one other possible kind of "refutation" of skepticism in the vicinity of Kant's that we might be tempted to attribute to Kant himself. Before concluding, I briefly consider and raise problems for thinking this argument could be Kant's own.

Section 5: Against the Argument from Temporal Properties as such.

This reading would consider Kant's reference to time-determinations to be a reference to temporal properties as such and not to our determinations of, or objective judgments about, these properties. The reading I have in mind is an argument by exclusion. Let's call it the Argument from Temporal Properties as such: It would go roughly as follows:

(1) I am conscious of the temporal properties of my mental states.
(2) Temporal properties and mental states must be properties of something.
(3) They can't be properties of a mental substance.
(4) So, they must be properties of a material substance in space (like a brain or human body).
(5) Therefore, at least brains and human bodies exist.

Whatever the independent merits of this kind of argument, it cannot be Kant's argument. The problem is with premise (3). Premise (3) depends on the following embedded premises:

(3*) I never perceive a mental substance either through introspection or outer sense.

(3**) Perception of a substance is necessary to judge the existence of the substance.

Kant definitely endorses (3*) in the Refutation and throughout the text (e.g., A108, and Paralogisms). Yet, if Kant assumes (3**), he assumes a claim very close to, but even more empiricist than, the postulate of actuality, the very claim that the Refutation is meant to defend. The postulate claims that *connection with* perception is necessary and sufficient for actuality. Premise (3**) claims that *perception* is necessary and sufficient for actuality. Any interpretation of the Refutation that assumes premise (3**) reduces the argument to vicious circularity.

The Refutation is an indirect argument for the postulate of actuality. It is meant to show that the category of actuality is a legitimate condition on our inquiry into reality and that even Cartesian skepticism fails to undermine this condition. If Kant implicitly assumes the postulate *as a premise*, on the Humean ground that we never encounter mental substances through perception or introspection, then the argument begs the question.

Such an interpretation might be misled by the third premise of the Refutation. Recall that it claims,

> This persistent thing, however, cannot be an intuition in me. For all grounds of determining my existence that can be encountered in me are representations… (B275)

It is clear how one could infer that the reason the "persisting thing cannot be an intuition in me" is the fact that I do not ever *find*, or introspectively intuit, a persisting thing in me. Kant certainly endorses this view here and throughout the text (e.g., A108). This inference as it stands, however, is *not* the source of the circularity. The circularity follows from a further step in the reconstruction, namely the inference that *because* we never introspectively encounter a persisting thing, it is *impossible* that that *type* of thing exists, and could be the bearer of my

states. If Kant makes this second inference, as the Argument from the Temporal Properties as such does, then the Refutation is in trouble.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have offered a defense of a certain way of reading Kant's Refutation of Idealism, according to which Kant places certain theoretical demands on Descartes' starting point for theoretical philosophy. If self-awareness is to be our philosophical foundation, then we must at least be able to show that the thing of which we are aware is an objective thing in the world, with the kinds of determinable properties that an objective world view should be able to determine. Kant's strategy of showing that inner experience presupposes outer experience amounts to the claim that being conscious of myself as a time-determinable self requires knowing that I am the thing that determines objects in the world.

I have also argued that Kant's Refutation of Idealism, although not a decisive argument against skepticism, shifts the debate from one about the immediacy of perception, or its sufficiency for actuality, to one that raises doubts about the situation of the cognitive subject and the question whether she is enjoying experience at all. I have suggested that this type of question is a transcendent one, and that Kant's own transcendental idealism offers some systematic reasons for dismissing it altogether. It is to the task of articulating the resources of transcendental idealism that I now turn.

Chapter 3: The Limits of Sensibility: A Puzzle for Transcendental Idealism

Could there be things to which our minds, given their constitution, can in principle have no access? Could there be minds so radically unlike ours that they detect things that we in principle cannot? Kant calls such things and minds "noumena," or "things in themselves," and admits their *logical* possibility, while denying that we can have any insight into their *real* possibility.[1] According to Kant, establishing a concept's real possibility is necessary for legitimizing it for theoretical philosophy.[2] An interpretive puzzle arises when we consider Kant's qualified remarks about the possibility of noumena together with one of the central theses of Transcendental Idealism. This thesis holds that the concept of noumena places a limit on the epistemic reach of "sensibility," the human perceptual faculty. We can formulate this thesis as follows:

---

[1] I use "things in themselves" and "noumena" interchangeably throughout the paper, unless otherwise indicated. The puzzle as I've posed it makes some assumptions about how to read Kant's claims about our lack of insight into noumena. Some readers think that Kant believes that we *can* know both that they exist and that they are not spatio-temporal. Karl Ameriks, for example, writes, "Kant thus seems to allow that we can't *prove* things in themselves beyond us…, although we also of course should not deny them. On the other hand, Kant **definitely believes** there surely are things in themselves that need to be in some way contrasted with phenomena, and he holds that even if we **can't specifically determine** them we **can be sure they exist and do not have a spatio-temporal character**." See Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, Oxford University Press, 1982/2002, 119. This passage refers to a variety of different kinds of cognitive task. I agree that Kant definitely *believes*, but this belief does not constitute certainty *that they exist and do not have spatio temporal character*. Rather, as I develop in this chapter, it is the fact that we cannot hope to *prove* even their real possibility in the context of theoretical reason that entitles us to form beliefs about them of a non-theoretical kind.

[2] See Chignell, "Real Repugnance and Belief about Things-in-Themselves: A Problem and Kant's Three Solutions," *Kant's Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality*, De Gruyter, 2010 ch. 7; and Chignell, "Real Repugnance and our Ignorance of Things-in-Themselves: A Lockean Problem in Kant and Hegel," *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*, 7(2011):135-159. Chignell argues that Kant has a modal condition on knowledge (*Wissen*), according to which we must *prove* the real possibility of an object in order to have knowledge of it. This seems right to me. But we should avoid attributing to Kant the stronger view that we can *only* establish the real possibility of an object via a confirming instance in perception. Kant simply does not require a confirming instance. A concept can be really possible if its object conforms to the conditions of possible experience. Chignell distinguishes two senses of real possibility, the second of which seems to be aligned with this looser sense of possibility. He calls this "formal real possibility."

> UNDERSTANDING-LIMITS-SENSE (ULS): Empirical knowledge is restricted to the domain of appearances by the concept of things in themselves and so is (in some sense to be elaborated) sub-ultimate.

Now the puzzle arises: If we cannot even grant that things-in-themselves are *really possible*, how does merely thinking the concept place a restriction or limit on the scope of perception, or empirical knowledge? Why should we view empirical knowledge as sub-ultimate for the sake of a concept that is *merely* conceivable, but which we cannot ever say is metaphysically possible, let alone actual?[3]

Understanding real possibility is central to understanding Kant's epistemology as a whole and its dependence on intuition. At the start, I argued that we should understand Kant's claims about the contents of concepts as claims about their epistemic significance and not about their semantic content. Kant's famous dictum that "thoughts without content are empty," is, despite appearances, a claim about *knowledge* and not a claim about semantic content. One goal of this chapter is to show that the concept of noumena, or things in themselves, is the paradigm example of a concept that, while entirely *empty* in Kant's sense, most definitely has semantic content, in the contemporary sense. If it did not, it could not serve the limiting function in Kant's transcendental idealism that it is meant to.

My other aim is to show that the puzzle of ULS just raised poses a special problem for certain interpretations of the distinction between appearances and thing in themselves. In section 1, I lay out the puzzle in detail, examining Kant's notions of logical and real possibility, in order to show how, and under which interpretations, the puzzle arises. I argue that any interpretation of transcendental idealism that speculates about the metaphysical or explanatory relations

[3] Kant offers a distinction between the negative and positive senses of "noumena" at B307-309. There is an interpretive question whether this distinction can help us out of the puzzle at hand. I say more about this in section 6.

between appearances and things in themselves falls prey to the puzzle. In section 2, I offer an interpretation that avoids the puzzle. This reading appeals to Kant's claims about the sorts of attitudes we are justified in taking toward noumena. According to Kant, we can think about noumena "problematically," but not "assertorically." That is, we can *suppose* or *assume* propositions about their possibility for the sake of argument, but cannot make decisive judgments about their real possibility one way or the other, let alone their actual existence or properties. This discussion about the attitudes we are (or are not) entitled to take toward noumena suggests a distinction between metaphysical possibility (*per se*) and metaphysical inquirability. Establishing the real possibility of a concept, or a concept's object, is necessary for it to be an object of metaphysical inquiry, but not a condition of its being metaphysically possible *per se*. The puzzle of ULS dissolves once we see that the concept of noumena cannot lead us to *assert* any *qualitative* limit on empirical knowledge, but only to raise *doubts* about the possibility that empirical knowledge reaches to *all* that could possibly exist. The "negative function of noumena," or the limit things in themselves place on empirical knowledge, is, thus, merely quantitative in nature.

Resolving the puzzle of ULS in this way has significant implications for interpreting Transcendental Idealism more generally, including the distinction between phenomena and noumena. In sections 3 and 4, I show that the puzzle of ULS suggests that that distinction should be understood *methodologically*, in terms of the boundary between objects of possible metaphysical inquiry, or of metaphysics *as a science*, and objects that fall beyond metaphysical inquiry.

Section 1: UNDERSTANDING-LIMITS-SENSE: The Negative Use of Noumena

Consider Kant's remarks about the negative use of noumena:

(I) The concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept**, in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. But it is nevertheless not invented arbitrarily, but is rather connected with the limitation of sensibility, yet without being able to posit anything positive outside of the domain of the latter. (A255/B310-11)[4]

(II) The concept of a **noumenon,** i.e., of a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself (solely through a pure understanding), is not at all contradictory; for one cannot assert of sensibility that it is the only possible kind of intuition. Further, this concept is necessary in order not to extend sensible intuition to things in themselves, and thus to limit the objective validity of sensible cognition…(A254/B310)

(III) Now in this way our understanding acquires a negative expansion, i.e., it…limits [sensibility] by calling things in themselves (not considered as appearances) *noumena*… (A256/B312).

In (I)-(III), Kant articulates the thesis of ULS. The concept of noumena has a "negative use" in restricting the epistemic "pretension" of sensibility, the perceptual faculty. Because we cannot "*assert* of sensibility" that it is the only "possible" way of accessing reality, noumena are conceivable, or logically possible. The inference from the mere conceivability of noumenal minds and objects to the epistemic limit on human sensibility constitutes a "negative expansion" of the understanding, the human faculty of thought. This *expansion* is *negative* insofar as it tells about the restriction on sensibility without thereby making any *positive* existential or predicative judgments about noumena. This expansion is of the *understanding* insofar as it is known *a priori*. UNDERSTANDING-LIMITS-SENSE thus earns its name when we consider that the very idea of noumena or things in themselves is inferred *completely a priori*, without any evidence or material from the senses. The inference is based on the mere thought that our minds, and our

[4] See also (A251), (A288/B344).

ways of knowing, might not be the only ones. Even this initial reflection is made entirely *a priori*.

UNDERSTANDING-LIMITS-SENSE must be distinguished from another core thesis of Transcendental Idealism:

> SENSE-LIMITS-UNDERSTANDING (SLU): Synthetic *a priori* judgments must be restricted to the domain of possible experience, and cannot be made of things in themselves.

While both theses express a way one of the two main cognitive faculties restricts the epistemic reach of the other, they are importantly different. ULS restricts the scope of *empirical* or *a posteriori* judgments, while SLU restricts the scope of synthetic *a priori* judgments. In SLU, the faculty of sensibility limits the understanding's "theoretical" or "speculative" use, by virtue of the special epistemology of synthetic *a priori* judgment, the kind of judgment used in theoretical philosophy. For Kant, synthetic judgments require some "third thing" that justifies the addition of a predicate to a concept in which it is not analytically contained.[5] In the case of empirical, or synthetic *a posteriori*, judgments, the third thing is a particular perceptual experience, an empirical judgment, or an empirical law. My reason for judging that "The cat is on the mat," is my perceptual experience as of the cat on the mat. In the case of synthetic *a priori,* judgment, the third thing is either an *a priori* intuition (for mathematical judgments), or the concept of a *possible experience* in general (for metaphysical judgments). As we saw in chapter 1, intuition must still be in some way called upon in showing that a concept has an object of possible experience. We can know that "All events have causes," on Kant's view, because causal

[5] It is worth noting that the synthetic *a priori* judgments are knowledge claims. Kant's appeal to the third thing that is to justify such judgments is at the same time an account of how we must show the real possibility of the objects of metaphysical judgments.

structure is a condition for a thing's being an object of a possible experience at all, which is to say, a condition on an object's being time-determinable.[6]

It is uncontroversial that something like the restriction described in SLU rules out those noumenal concepts associated with what Kant calls the "positive sense" of noumena (God, freedom, and the soul) for use in synthetic *a priori* theoretical judgment.[7] Noumena in this positive sense, by definition, are not objects of possible (human) experience, but are things that are thought with particular (positive) determinations (properties, powers, etc.) through the intellect alone. Yet the restriction in SLU also applies, or minimally should apply, to "things in themselves," or noumena taken only in the "negative sense." The "negative sense" of "noumena," as a negative definition, is the concept of a thing considered in abstraction from our way of experiencing it. By this negative definition, noumena *are not* objects of possible experience. Although defined negatively, the traditional metaphysical reception of Kant holds that it is things in themselves in this negative sense that are taken to ground, explain, or perhaps even cause (depending on your favored interpretation) the appearances to which we do have access. Because intuition can never be in any way called upon to justify claims about the existence or particular determinations of noumena, SLU thus grounds what has come to be called the "noumenal ignorance thesis," which states, unsurprisingly, that we cannot know anything about noumena, even in the negative sense.

---

[6] In particular, we saw that we can know that "All events have causes," because applying the schema of succession according to a rule is a necessary condition on empirical time-determination. Here it is clear that by "object of possible experience," Kant has in mind possible objects that can be known in *one determinate and integrated* experience.

[7] As we saw in chapter 1, the categories fall within the constraints of the limit. Because the categories are necessary conditions for the possibility of empirical knowledge, their use in both *a priori* and empirical judgment can be justified. Consequently, their use is restricted to objects of possible empirical knowledge (e.g., B146-48, A146-47/B185-87, A239/B298-99).

In passage (III) above, we see that, in thinking about noumena, the understanding "…also immediately sets boundaries for itself, not cognizing these things through categories, hence merely thinking them under the name of an unknown something," (A256/B312). Insofar as the categories can never be applied beyond the scope of sensibility (specifically those sensible conditions named in the Schematism), we cannot hope to have determinate knowledge about anything that falls beyond that scope. Because we cannot even apply categories to noumena, "In the end," Kant writes, "… we have no insight into the possibility of such *noumena*, and the domain outside of the sphere of appearances is empty (for us)…" (A254/B310). Nevertheless, the mere concept *somehow* places a restriction on sensibility and empirical knowledge.

Accordingly, we should view sensibility's output, perceptual experience and the empirical knowledge grounded on it as, in some sense, sub-ultimate. The sub-ultimate status of empirical knowledge to which ULS refers has been elaborated in a number of ways, in terms of the human inability to grasp the way reality *really* is, the way reality *intrinsically* is, or the way *all* of reality is. These ways correlate with various interpretations of transcendental idealism and the distinction between appearances and things in themselves.[8] Traditional two-worlds readings hold that through empirical knowledge, we investigate a world of mere appearances, which do not reveal the way things really, or most fundamentally, are. This reading posits a second and distinct world of noumena, or things in themselves, which is a world of really real beings that (in

[8] For a recent example of the first kind of reading, see Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant*, Oxford University Press, 2003. For a not-so-recent example of the first kind of reading see Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, Trans. Payne, Vol. 1. Courier Dover Publications, 2012. For examples of the second, see Langton, *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*, Oxford University Press, 1998; Allais, "Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy, *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 45.33 (2007): 459-484; Ameriks, "Kant's Idealism on a Moderate Interpretation," *Kant's Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, Springer Netherlands, 2011, 29-53; and arguable Allison, (1983), who sees his view as a development of Prauss's, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*, Vol. 90, Bouvier, 1989. For an example of the third reading see Robinson, "Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearances and Things in Themselves," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 32.3 (1994): 411-441. I develop a version of the third here.

some sense) grounds or explains the existence of the less real world of appearances. Two-aspects readings (including Langton, Allais, Ameriks, and, arguably, Allison), hold that empirical knowledge teaches us only the relational properties of things, properties which *noumena*, understood as things considered apart from our modes of intuiting them, do not *intrinsically* (or at least non-relationally) possess.

I argue that we should embrace the third reading. The limit placed on sensibility by the concept of noumena does not speak to the *quality* of empirical knowledge at all, but rather only raises doubt about the *universality* of its domain. According to this reading, the concept of noumena does not speak to the question whether empirical knowledge is getting at the way things really or intrinsically are, but only to the question whether its domain, and the human perspective articulated by that domain, is universal, which is to say whether it can get at the way *everything* is. The issue then is whether, through empirical knowledge, we are entitled to believe that we occupy a single and uniquely correct perspective on the world. While all of these readings converge on the idea that the possibility of noumena somehow limits the epistemic reach of empirical knowledge, they conceive of that limit in importantly different ways.

1.1: The Puzzle of ULS

For Kant, the logical possibility of a concept is never sufficient for judging the real possibility of its object. Because experience can *in principle* never be drawn on to justify the claim that "Noumena are possible," noumena cannot be shown to be *really* possible. The puzzle of ULS then arises from the conjunction of the following considerations:

(i) The concept of noumena places an epistemic limit on sensibility. (A251, A288/B344)

(ii) We cannot assert that noumena are *really possible*, but only conceivable, or *logically possible.* (A287-89/B344-45)[9]

The tension among these two claims resides in the suggestion that simply thinking the thought of noumena is a sufficient reason to place an actual limit on the epistemic reach of sensibility and the empirical knowledge it delivers, *even though we know a priori* that we cannot, and can never, assert their real possibility. If we cannot even grant their real possibility, how can merely thinking the thought place any limit on anything?

To motivate the problem, consider an analogy. We can conceive of the possibility that there could be things that we cannot even *think*, or of which we cannot have any concept. We cannot assert that these things are metaphysically possible or that they are not, because we cannot even name them. Yet it is nevertheless conceivable that there *might* (or might not) be things for which we cannot have concepts. Does this thought on its own in any way degrade the *quality* of our knowledge about concepts and what we take them to apply to? Does the mere idea of an inconceivable thing lead us to believe that the knowledge we have of concepts, along with

[9] One might think that, at this point, we can use the standard reading of the positive and negative senses of noumena to block the very formulation of the puzzle of ULS. If we read (II) in terms of positive sense of noumena, and (I) in terms of the negative sense of noumena, then, one might argue, the puzzle does not arise. On this line, only noumena in the negative sense, i.e. things considered in abstraction from the way we intuit them that in turn are part of the causal explanation of our appearances, would be required to set the limit on sensibility, and these things would be really possible (or maybe even actual). Noumena in the positive sense (i.e., objects knowable by a different kind of mind) would then be the ones Kant claims are *not* really possible but only conceivable, or logically possible. Passages that connect the term "negative sense" of noumena with the limit on sensibility include B308, where Kant first introduces the distinction (although the interpretation we should give of this term is not straightforward). Passage (A288/B344-45) might be read as connecting the standard reading of the negative sense of noumena, or the idea of things abstracted from the way we intuit them, with ULS. However, there are several problems with this reading. First, Kant claims both that noumena in the sense of things considered in abstraction from our intuition is itself an "empty" concept, and also that we are not entitled to apply any categories to it, including, presumably, the category of possibility. Second, other passages suggest that noumena qua "other sorts of things" are a necessary aspect understanding's limit on sensibility. For example, "The concept of the noumenon is therefore not the concept of an object, but rather the problem, unavoidably connected with the limitation of sensibility, of whether there may not be objects *entirely exempt from the intuition of our sensibility*, a question that can only be given the indeterminate answer that since sensible intuition does not pertain to all things without distinction room remains for more and other objects…" (A288/B344-5). The positive and negative senses do not seem to map neatly onto I and II above. I argue below (section 6.2) that the positive and negative senses are better understood in terms of the assertoric and problematic attitudes. (For further discussion of the assertoric and problematic forms of judgment, see section 1.4 below.)

any laws (whether logical or psychological) do not truly apply, or properly describe, the nature of their objects?

We find important examples of the puzzle in the "Antinomies" chapter. Kant meant for the phenomenal/noumenal distinction to resolve the "apparent" contradiction between claims like "The world is causally determined" and "There is transcendental freedom." Insofar as the world is phenomenal, it is causally determined. However, if we cannot know whether souls might exist, then there is space to entertain the possibility that they do, and, perhaps, if they do, they might be free. The result, however, is that causal knowledge of nature is said to hold only of appearances and not of things in themselves. We might then wonder, if freedom is *merely conceivable,* in what sense does this in-principle *unknowable* concept degrade our causal knowledge of nature? Why, and in what way, does it imply that we should regard our empirical knowledge as sub-ultimate?

Some puzzles that involve modal claims can (arguably) be dissolved by clarifying the modalities in question. Consider the familiar example of the paradox of omnipotence. Could God create a stone so heavy he could not lift it? If he could not create it, then he is not omnipotent. If he could create it, but could not lift it, then he is not omnipotent. One (putative) way to try to resolve the paradox of omnipotence is by parsing the question in the following way: Is it *conceivable* that God could create a stone so heavy that it would be *metaphysically impossible* for him to lift it? Parsing the question in this way is meant to permit the answer "No," while still allowing for God's omnipotence. Answering "No," on this line, does not entail that God is not omnipotent, but only indicates a limit on what we human beings can conceive. Inconceivability would thus not entail metaphysical impossibility.[10]

[10] For further discussion of the omnipotence paradox, see Hoffman and Rosenkrantz, "Omnipotence," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2002/2012. The many rationalist philosophers who have grappled with this problem

Resolving the puzzle of ULS also requires disambiguating modal terms. In the next sections, I examine Kant's notions of *real possibility* (1.2) and *logical possibility* (1.3). Then, I analyze these concepts in relation to what Kant calls the assertoric and problematic forms of judgment (1.4). This analysis in turn throws light on how the puzzle arises for some readings of Transcendental Idealism and not others (2).

1.2: Real Possibility

Kant claims that noumena are *logically* possible, but cannot be known to be *really* possible. What is the significance of this distinction? He writes,

(A) The possibility of a thought or of a concept rests on the law of non-contradiction… The thing of which even the mere thought is impossible (i.e., the concept is self-contradictory) is itself impossible. However, the thing of which the concept is possible is not therefore a possible thing. The first possibility may be called logical, the second, real possibility; the proof of the latter is the proof of the objective reality of the concept, which we are entitled to demand at any time. But it [the proof] can never be furnished otherwise than by presentation of the object corresponding to the concept; for otherwise it always remains a mere thought, of which, until it is displayed in an example, it always remains uncertain whether any object corresponds to it, or whether it be empty, i.e. whether it may serve in any way for knowledge. (*Progress*, 20:325)[11,12]

(B) In a word, all of these concepts [the categories] could not be **vouched for** and their **real** possibility thereby established, if all sensible intuition were taken away, and there then

---

would likely be unwilling to sacrifice logical possibility's extension to all metaphysical possibilities, as this solution does.

[11] See Kant, "What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff? *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Trans. Allison et al, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

[12] See also (B xxvi), "To **cognize** an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility (whether by the testimony of experience from its actuality or *a priori* through reason). But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself, i.e., as long as my concept is a possible thought, even if I cannot give any assurance whether or not there is a corresponding object somewhere within the sum total of all possibilities. But in order to ascribe objective validity to such a concept (real possibility, for the first sort of possibility was merely logical) something more is required. This "more," however need not be sought in theoretical sources of cognition; it may also lie in practical ones."

> remained only **logical** possibility, i.e., that the concept (thought) is possible is not the issue; the issue is rather whether it relates to an object and therefore signifies anything. (fn B303)

Kant often uses real possibility interchangeably with "objective reality," although in (A) he applies the former to objects and the latter to concepts. In (B), however, he refers to the real possibility of a certain set of concepts, specifically the categories. In chapter 1, we saw that the real possibility of the categories is only fully established if Kant has an answer to the object problem, the problem of showing how the concepts can be shown to apply to *objects* and not merely to our mind's organization of the perception of objects. The *logical* possibility of the categories never comes into doubt, for they are, after all, essential *forms* of the understanding. The problem is that logical possibility, for Kant, is the mere possibility of a thought, or concept, and is insufficient for showing that or how *objects* that correspond to the categories are possible. Real possibility (or objective reality) can only be established by *some* appeal to intuition in a possible experience.[13]

In the Postulates of Empirical Thinking, Kant restricts application of the category of "possibility" to "Whatever agrees with the formal conditions of experience (in accordance with intuition and concepts)," (A218/B266).[14] These conditions include spatiality and temporality

[13] The restriction of the extension of the categories to objects of possible experience is just the familiar claim articulated in SLU. Recall that any use of a categorial concept is a synthetic *a priori* judgment, because of the kinds of concepts the categories are. SLU states that synthetic *a priori* judgments must be limited to objects of possible experience.

[14] Kant allows judgments of actuality even for claims about very small, large, or remote objects that cannot really be perceived, so long as they are spatiotemporal and tied in some way to perceptions that are possible for us (A226/B273-4). Judgments of possibility are even more general, in that they include claims about states of affairs that might not obtain in the actual world (A223/B271). Objects or concepts need only conform to the conditions of possible experience in order to be known to be really possible.

plus categorial properties and relations.[15] Conformity with these conditions entails that the object is a candidate for possible intuition and a possible experience.

In recent work, Andrew Chignell has traced the notion of "real possibility" through Kant's pre-critical notion of "real repugnance," and finally back to Locke's notion of "inconsistency in Nature."[16] "Real repugnance" refers, roughly, to the empirical unviability, rather than the logical impossibility, that two given properties can be co-instantiated, as in, for example, the failure of oil and water to mix. Chignell views (I think rightly) "real repugnance" as an aspect of Kant's historical turn away from a Leibnizian epistemology to a more empiricist one. For Leibniz, a powerful enough intellect, or capacity for analysis, guided by simple norms of logical consistency, could access all of existence. For Locke, however, some empirical "proof" that real repugnancies can be ruled out is required to claim that an object is really possible. In this way the domain of the really possible is restricted to the domain of the actual. There is no guarantee that even the most complete analysis of a concept could prove whether the concept had any real instances in the world. Even a complete concept might turn out to be empirically unrealizable due to certain metaphysical "inconsistencies" or disharmonies. "Real repugnance," as Chignell argues, is thus a metaphysical correlate of logical inconsistency, a kind of metaphysical canceling-out.[17] We *rule out* real repugnancies only when we've had actual experience of the objects in question.

Kant's mature view is less empiricist. In the Refutation of Idealism, we saw that Kant thinks that connection with perception is sufficient for actuality, so no "confirming instance" that

[15] Notice that I do not claim that they must be organized *by* the categories. To say so would be to embrace a conceptualist reading of Kant, which is not at all presupposed by conformity claim. I argue against reading Kant as a conceptualist in chapter 1.

[16] Chignell, (2010).

[17] Chignell, (2010), 142.

the real repugnancies *have been* ruled out is required, even for judgments of actuality. Even very remote, very small, or otherwise imperceptible objects can be known to be actual so long as they follow from empirical laws which can be confirmed. Moreover, Kant's postulate of possibility allows that we can know the possibility of any object or state of affairs that conforms to the conditions for experience (in a cognizable world). So, while an actual perception (in this world) is not a requirement for judging possibility, an object's being *perceivable*, or at least following from perceivable things, ensures that experience can, at least in principle and in the relevant circumstances, be called upon to rule out real repugnancies.

The question then is how to interpret the relation between real possibility, the postulate of possibility, and the possibility of *experience*. Does Kant's definition of possibility in the Postulates suggest that *only* those objects that can be given in conformity with possible experience *are* really possible, while those that that do not are really *impossible*? If this were Kant's view, then he would have to claim that noumena are really *impossible*. Yet if we could *know* that noumena are really, *metaphysically* impossible, the puzzle of ULS would arise with overwhelming force. If we could know that noumena were metaphysically impossible then the concept of noumena could play no role whatsoever in limiting empirical knowledge.

Yet, Kant only ever makes the weaker claim that "we have no *insight* into the real possibility of noumena." Recall that the *postulates* are "Postulates for empirical thinking." They are definitions of the modal categories, insofar as they can be applied in empirical judgment. So the postulate can be read with the following qualification: "Whatever conforms to the conditions of possible experience in general [*can be legitimately asserted to be*] possible." The Postulate thus articulates a condition on asserting, or cognizing, the *epistemic* status of objects. The

epistemic viability of an object is determined by its empirical possibility and so is determined by its conformity with the conditions of experience.

So the fact that noumena fail to conform to the conditions for empirical possibility does not entail that they are *really impossible*, but it does entail that they are not candidates for knowledge, at least from a theoretical point of view. We must distinguish, therefore, between the empirical possibility defined in the Postulates and real possibility *per se*. Although Kant's point in the Postulates is to restrict *applications* of the category of real possibility to the domain of the empirically possible, he does not mean to identify the domain of this restricted *application* with the domain of real possibility *per se*. There is thus more to the concept of real possibility than is captured by the concept of the empirically possible, just as there is more to the concept of *substance* than is captured by its application condition, namely the persistence of the real in time. Yet only in respecting this restriction is the assertion of, or application of real possibility to objects, *justified*. In this way, the postulate of empirical thinking defines the application condition for the concept of real possibility.

Although we *can* assert, analytically, that noumena are *empirically* impossible, Kant's claim that "we can have no insight into their real possibility" suggests that, we *cannot* assert anything about their real possibility. Our lack of empirical access to them means that there can be no third thing that can be called upon to determine their real possibility either way. While empirical possibility is the gold standard for coming to know the real possibility of things, it is not, for that reason, necessarily coextensive with real possibility.

1.3: Logical Possibility

Kant identifies logical possibility, on the other hand, with mere "conceivability." That a concept is "conceivable" or "thinkable" means, for Kant, that it is free from contradiction, and so conforms to the rules for thought. He writes,

> In the **mere concept** of a thing no characteristic of its existence can be encountered at all. For even if this concept is so complete that it lacks nothing required for thinking of a thing with all of its inner determinations, *still existence has nothing in the least to do with all of this*…(A225/B272, my italics).

Perfect conceivability requires that a concept comply with the logical laws that govern the understanding, but "has nothing in the least to do with existence." For Kant, conceivability is an insufficient epistemic condition for judging real possibility, because, by analysis alone, no "third thing" is provided through which the real possibility of the object can be determined. Gods, souls, and the noumenal in general, however, are not the kinds of things that can ever be empirically justified. Yet, "room remains," as Kant puts it, "for more and other objects; they cannot therefore be absolutely denied," (A287/B344).

The central question raised by the puzzle of ULS is how precisely to understand the nature of the "room" that remains. The "room" in question is the space of those things that are logically possible but that cannot be known to be really possible. Let's call it the space of the merely logically possible. If we cannot even grant that merely logically possible things are really possible, then what sense does it make to say *there is space* "for more and other things?" We need an account of the space of the merely logically possible that explains how it can both have *nothing to do with existence*, and also *make room* for the *existence* of more and other things.

We find a clue in Kant's discussion of the problematic form of judgment. In denying our access to their real possibility and admitting their logical possibility, Kant claims that noumena are the "problem" for the understanding engaged in transcendental philosophy. Several passages

tie the mere logical possibility of noumena to the problematic form of judgment (e.g., A255/B310-11, A287/B343-4). To entertain their logical possibility just is to "think them problematically." Kant writes,

> In the end, however, we have no insight into the possibility of such *noumena*…i.e., we have an understanding that extends farther than sensibility **problematically,** but no intuition…through which objects outside of the field of sensibility could be given and about which the understanding could be employed **assertorically.** The concept of a noumenon is therefore merely a **boundary concept,** in order to limit the pretension of sensibility, and therefore only of negative use. (A255/B310-11)

In this passage, Kant tells us that the understanding extends beyond sensibility problematically, and then immediately infers that the concept of noumena plays only a *negative* role in transcendental philosophy, by limiting the pretension of sensibility. To see how the concept of noumena can play even this minimal negative role, we must ask what it means for the understanding to extend problematically.

1.4: Thinking Problematically vs. Thinking Assertorically

In defining problematic judgments, Kant writes,

> *Problematic* judgments are those where the affirmation or negation is taken as merely *possible* (optional)…Hence a problematic proposition is one that expresses only logical possibility (which is not objective possibility). I.e., it expresses a free choosing to let such a proposition stand – a mere electing to admit into the understanding… (A74-5/B100-101)[18,19]

[18] Here, I cite Pluhar's (1996) translation, which better captures Kant's meaning. See Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Trans. Pluhar, Hackett, 1996. Guyer and Wood's translation states, "**Problematic** judgments are those in which one regards the assertion or denial as merely **possible** (arbitrary)… The problematic proposition is therefore that which only expresses logical possibility (which is not objective), i.e., a free choice to allow such a proposition to count as valid, a merely arbitrary assumption of it in the understanding" (A74-5/B100-101). Guyer and Wood translate "*beliebig*" in the parenthetical as "arbitrary," but the sense of it here is better captured as "optional." They also translate "*willkürliche*" as "arbitrary," while Pluhar translates it more as an "electing," which seems to better capture the sense.

[19] By "objective" possibility, Kant means real possibility. Real possibility is "objective," in the sense that the reality of the object can (in principle) be vouched for by experience. We can justify judgments about really possible objects by appeal to this possible experience. "Objective" or "real" possibility is not determined by logical possibility alone.

Problematic judgments are "elective." A subject can make a supposition for the sake of argument and derive conclusions. Yet, without knowing that the supposition is true, both the supposition and the conclusion are thought problematically, not assertorically. We think problematically when we entertain hypotheticals and disjunctions. A subject can think "If p, then q," without taking p or q seriously, or committing to their truth. Similarly, Kant claims that to entertain "p or q," does not yet require a commitment to the truth of p or the truth of q.

"Assertoric judgments," on the other hand, "are those in which [the proposition] is taken as true," (A74/B100). When a subject asserts "p" she takes the truth of p to obtain. Similarly, in assertoric predicative judgments "p is x," she takes both p and its property x seriously. To take x seriously, for Kant, also requires a commitment to the existence of p.

To think problematically or assertorically about this or that proposition is thus to take a kind of attitude toward it. When propositions p and q are embedded in a hypothetical judgment, "If p, then q," the thinker takes a certain attitude toward p and q that can be distinguished from the attitude she takes in asserting p or asserting q.

In the context of theoretical philosophy, there are certain things that we can know to be actual. There are also certain things that we can know to be possible. Those objects we can know to be possible can in principle be confirmed or disconfirmed by some relation to possible experience and, when they are so confirmed, thereby known to be actual. Yet there are still other things that we cannot judge anything about, but rather can only ever entertain, or think problematically. We can, of course, entertain actual things and things we know to be really possible through the problematic attitude, if we elect to. The boundary between the problematic and assertoric attitudes is thus drawn by our *possible access* to the real possibility of things, and so, for Kant, by their empirical possibility. If a proposition *p* is about an object or state of affairs

that conforms to the conditions of possible experience, then the real possibility of *p can be raised* from problematic to assertoric judgment. There is some hope for deciding between *p* and *not p*. However, if an object fails to conform to these conditions, there is no such hope and the subject can only ever think about *p* problematically. That means, in entertaining the truth of *p*, a subject can only ever legitimately think, "*p* or not *p*."

Because, noumena can never be objects of experience, noumenal concepts can never be thought assertorically.[20] They are therefore, empirically and epistemically impossible for us. Yet because they cannot be assertorically judged *in any way*, we can never assert that they are really *impossible*. Because we can only ever think their possibility *problematically*, their possibility is *wholly* uncertain, or, to use Kant's phrase, "doubtful."

Section 2: Resolving the Puzzle

The puzzle of ULS only arises for certain interpretations of the distinction between phenomena and noumena. The two-worlds distinction between the less real world of appearances and the really real world of things in themselves holds that latter world causes, or minimally, explains the existence of the former. Consequently, our knowledge of appearances does not get at the way things *really*, or most really, are. Now the puzzle of ULS arises: How does entertaining the mere idea of noumena, of which we *know* we can never assert the real possibility, give rise to the *assertion* that empirical knowledge *does not* or *cannot* tell us the way things *really* are? If we can only ever think the possibility of noumena *problematically*, why should we degrade our best and only means of unveiling reality on its account? It seems that *at*

[20] One might think that particular noumena like God or the soul are not by definition unperceivable. However, Kant thinks we can know by analysis that they are unperceivable.

best the idea of noumena can make us raise the question *whether*, in empirically investigating the world, we are getting at the way *everything* is. This is the question that we can never answer.

Similarly, on a two-aspects reading of the distinction between phenomena and noumena, the mere logical possibility of noumena limits empirical knowledge to appearances, understood to consist in relational rather than intrinsic properties. So empirical knowledge, on this view, cannot tell us the way things are intrinsically or non-relationally, but only as they are in appearing in relation to us. Again the puzzle arises: how can merely entertaining the idea of noumena *problematically*, the metaphysical possibility of which we can never assert, give rise to the *assertion* that empirical knowledge *does not* or *cannot* give us a complete account of the objects we perceive? Again it seems that *at best* the idea of noumena can make us raise the question whether, in empirically investigating the world, we *might not* be getting at the way everything is. But again this is the question that we can never answer.

On the reading I'm suggesting we can respect the consistency of SLU while avoiding the puzzle of ULS. We can see this by distinguishing the following four domains.

(1) LOGICAL POSSIBILITY: the domain of the non-contradictory, i.e. the domain of what can be conceived or thought.

(2) REAL METAPHYSICAL POSSIBILITY: the domain of what can exist.

(3) THEORETICAL INQUIRABILITY: the domain of things that can be inquired into and can be *asserted* within the purview of *theoretical philosophy*, or "metaphysics as a science."[21]

(4) EMPIRICAL POSSIBILITY: the domain of what can be experienced.

Kant argues in the Postulates that (3), the domain of theoretical inquirability, should be restricted to (4), the domain of empirical possibility. Yet he does not thereby argue that the domain of (2), real possibility *per se*, is restricted to (4) empirical possibility. (And of course anything in (3),

[21] I also sometimes refer to this domain as the Metaphysically Inquirable.

the theoretically inquirable, and (4), the empirically possible, should also be in the domain of (1), the conceivable.) With respect to noumena, he repeatedly asserts that we cannot know whether there could be things in (1), the domain of the logically possible, which, although neither theoretically inquirable nor empirically possible, might nevertheless still be in (2) the domain of the metaphysically possible. The puzzle of ULS only arises for those views that insist on weighing in on the details of the relations that hold between the objects in that region of logically possibility that is not also coextensive with (3) – namely, the space of the *merely* logically possible – and the objects in the domain of (4), the empirically possible. Two-worlds readings hold that the mere logical possibility of noumena justifies the judgment that empirical knowledge isn't getting at the way things really are. But mere ideas can never justify theoretical *assertions,* knowledge claims which all fall into the domain of (3). Two-aspects readings hold that the mere logical possibility of noumena justifies the judgment that empirical knowledge isn't getting at a certain set of intrinsic or non-relational properties. But again, mere ideas can never justify theoretical assertions, i.e. claims in the domain of (3).

Our reading can do better. Although being logically possible is *not* enough to inquire into, assert, or even grant that noumena are metaphysically possible, *entertaining* their possibility, or "thinking them problematically," is sufficient for limiting the pretentions of sensibility to know everything. The limit arises from a legitimate, even mandatory, doubt about the extent of the human cognitive capacity. That the doubt is mandatory can be shown in the following: If we know (A) that the domain of theoretical inquiry is restricted to objects in the domain of empirical possibility, and we know (B) that the claim (A) also falls into the domain of theoretical inquirablity, then we can know *a priori* that the following claim (W) does *not* fall within the domain of theoretical inquirability: (W) *Our way of knowing is the only way*. That is,

if we *know* that, in our *theoretical* way of knowing, we can only make (metaphysical) modal judgments about empirically possible things, and if *this very knowledge* is also *theoretical* knowledge, then we can know *a priori* that we *can never* have theoretical knowledge that our (theoretical) way of knowing is the only possible way.[22]

The claim that *our way of knowing is the only way* is not the kind of claim that can in any way draw on experience for its justification, so we must *abstain* from asserting or denying *its* real possibility. If we cannot assert this claim as a metaphysical/theoretical claim, then we can and should view as *necessarily doubtful*, in the sense of *unknowable*, the claim that (3) the domain of metaphysical/theoretical inquiry is coextensive with (2) the domain of real metaphysical possibility. This *doubt* can fall into the domain of theoretical inquirability (3), although we can never *assert that* (3) and (4) are or are *not* coextensive. This assertion would also fall outside of (3). To "doubt" just is to hold as uncertain which of two exclusive disjuncts actually obtains.

In this way, the distinction between thinking assertorically and thinking problematically sheds light on the "empty space" that Kant wants to leave for the possibility of noumena. Consequently, there is nothing puzzling about the following.

(1) We can neither affirm nor deny the real possibility of noumena.

(2) If (1), then we can neither affirm nor deny the real possibility of other kinds of minds and ways of knowing (which would be noumenal).

(3) We can neither affirm nor deny the real possibility of other kinds of minds and ways of knowing. (from 1 and 2)

(4) If (3), then we can neither affirm nor deny that our way of knowing (i.e. empirical knowledge) is the only really possible way of knowing.

[22] Note that this is consistent with Kant's claim that we only have knowledge of ourselves as we appear to ourselves. For example, Kant's distinction between receptivity and spontaneity, which he calls the "metaphysical" distinction between the faculties is something we know by experience. See (*Jäsche Logic*, 36) and (*Critique of Practical Reason*, 5:47).

(5) If (4), then we can neither affirm nor deny that our way of knowing is getting at all there is to know, or all of reality.

On this reading, it is the inability to know the real possibility of noumena that justifies the claim that we cannot know that our way of knowing is the only way. This just means that the mere idea of noumena sets a limit on the epistemic reach of sensibility and empirical knowledge. We can see how noumena can serve a negative function in restricting sensibility, if the function is to get us to *doubt* whether sensibility can get at the way all of reality is (or could be). In this case, we do not require of a mere idea that it justify *theoretical assertions* about the limited nature or scope of empirical knowledge. Rather, the idea merely raises doubt about the domain of empirical knowledge and its coextension with the domain of real possibility.

The doubted proposition can be stated as follows: Either empirical knowledge does reach to the reality of all things or it does not. The doubt follows from the fact that we can have, in principle, no means of deciding between these two options. How could we, after all, assert anything about these matters, without transgressing the bounds of possible experience?

This solution to ULS also offers an additional benefit, namely of explaining how we can "freely entertain" the premises "noumena are possible," or even "noumena exist," in embedded hypothetical contexts, and still be good metaphysicians. Because we can legitimately *doubt* that we have complete access to all metaphysical possibilities, we can make *problematic* judgments of the kind needed to resolve Kant's Antinomies, e.g., "If we cannot know whether noumena are really possible, then *we cannot know* that transcendental freedom is really impossible." Kant takes the resolution of the Antinomies to be both a crowning achievement of Transcendental Idealism, and also a requirement for the possibility of genuine morality.[23] The absence of a

[23] We should note that the particular metaphysical possibilia with which Kant is most concerned are God, freedom, the world as a whole, and the soul. These concepts are not any old fanciful concepts, but concepts to which our minds are led by the nature of reason. The contents of these concepts reflect a kind of reification of the norms that

sufficient reason to doubt the reach of empirical causal knowledge would thus leave Kant in a lurch.

This reading is also consistent with Kant's claims in the practical philosophy that we can establish the real possibility of certain concepts on practical grounds. Theoretical inquiry has a certain end, namely to show us "what we can know." It aims at *determining* the ways things *are* and which things exist. Because of this end, theoretical reason's metaphysical inquiry is restricted to empirical possibility, because, as Chignell argues, through empirical means we can rule out real repugnancies. But were the end of our inquiry something else, say, knowing what we ought to do, or knowing how things *ought to be*, then we might be able to establish certain real possibilities in ways sufficient to that end. In the context of determining what we ought to do, i.e. in the context of practical inquiry, we can *assert* the real possibility of freedom, because it is a condition on the possibility of practical reason, and therefore a condition on the domain of the practical as such.

In the next section, I consider some objections that may have arisen.

2.1: Objections

Traditional readings might object that I'm begging some questions in assuming certain interpretations of the modal notions at play. Maybe by "real" possibility, Kant does not mean *metaphysical* possibility, but only epistemological possibility. And maybe Kant thinks logical

---

govern reason's otherwise legitimate and useful "systematic" nature. Specifically, in each of these cases, the understanding mistakenly posits an object to *complete* reason's ascension towards the unconditioned. It posits an object where there should only be a regulative principle of reason. Kant thinks the understanding arrives at the concept of God, a creator, in a failed attempt to answer a question to which reason is led by its systematic nature: if each event or object is (empirically) conditioned by a previous event or object, then what grounds the series of the conditions? The understanding then posits a first beginning *outside* of the temporal world, all with the aim of reaching a completed series of conditions. So, these concepts are neither on par with mythical characters nor with furiously sleeping green ideas, but are, according Kant, in some sense *natural* for us.

possibility is sufficient for granting metaphysical possibility.[24] On this reading, we would interpret the negative function of noumena in the following way: The metaphysical possibility of noumena limits the epistemic reach of empirical knowledge. If noumena are metaphysically possible, (or for that matter, actual, as many readings assume), then we obviously cannot know all metaphysical possibilities through empirical inquiry.

The problem with this reading is that it faces those passages in which Kant defines real possibility in ways that suggest he means *metaphysical* possibility, as he does in the passage from the *Progress* essay quoted above, as well as those in which he rejects the Leibnizian view that logical possibility is sufficient for metaphysical possibility. In the *Progress* essay, Kant argues that the "proof" of real possibility requires that the object be represented in a certain way. But the proof is required to *determine* whether the *object* is really possible or whether the concept is *merely* logically possible. This suggests that real possibility is metaphysical and that Kant is placing certain restrictions on how we can come to *know* metaphysical possibility. Yet *noumena* fall into that space of *uncertainty* in which we cannot know "whether any object corresponds to it, or whether it be empty…" We simply have no way of knowing whether there are – or even might be – these kinds of objects or whether the concepts are mere figments of thought.[25]

The second objection is more systematic and goes as follows: To say that we cannot know that noumena are metaphysically possible is to make a synthetic *a priori* judgment of precisely the kind that should be restricted to possible experience according to SLU. By attributing to Kant a *commitment* to doubting the possibility of noumena, does my solution to the

[24] In fact I used to think Kant had something like this in mind. Yet, if we look carefully at Kant's discussions of real possibility, he seems to have a metaphysical notion in mind.

[25] But, of course, figments of thought can have semantic content, too.

puzzle of ULS simply render his view inconsistent with SLU? Or to put the point slightly differently, does this solution to the puzzle of ULS violate the noumenal ignorance thesis? If we know that noumena fall outside the scope of metaphysical inquiry, do we not know something about them?

First, it is worth noting that, if the strong methodological reading violates noumenal ignorance, then it does in a much more minimal way than any other reading. Other readings speculate about the particular properties of things-in-themselves and the relations they stand in to appearances. My reading only ever claims that certain questions about noumena fall outside of the scope of metaphysical inquiry.

Second, it does not seem true that the claim about the scope of inquiry in question qualifies as a *knowledge* claim *about* noumena, although it does employ the concept. Rather it seems to be a claim about us, our epistemic situation, and the limits of cognition. In this way the objection misses the significance of analyzing mere logical possibility in terms of problematic judgment. When we judge that something is logically possible, we are, according to Kant, merely *entertaining* its possibility. The noumenal ignorance thesis should not be read as saying "We cannot even entertain noumena," because Kant obviously entertains them, and to use his phrase, "…we can think whatever we like," (fn Bxxvii). Rather, the noumenal ignorance thesis should be read in terms of the assertoric attitude. We can no more *assert*, or come to know, their *impossibility* than we can their possibility.[26, 27] The claim that we cannot make assertoric

[26] We can still hypothetically judge, for example, "If noumena are possible, then they are not spatiotemporal." Kant would (or at least should) say, in this case, that the second proposition, "they are not spatiotemporal," should not be taken assertorically. We can see this point if we translate the hypothetical to its equivalent disjunction: "Either noumena are impossible, or they are non-spatiotemporal."

[27] In the A Introduction, Kant's statement of the difference between analytic and synthetic judgments clearly refers to "affirmative" judgments. See (A6-7). This is evidence that Kant is really interested in theoretical assertions.

judgments *about* noumena is not itself a synthetic *a priori* assertoric judgment *about* noumena. Rather it is and expression of *doubt,* and so a mere problematic entertaining.

There is a kernel of truth to the idea that *something* is asserted when one claims, "x is logically possible but we cannot know that it is really possible." As we said, it implies that we cannot *know* either way whether x is possible. This is not yet an assertion about x or its properties, however, but simply implies that we can entertain the concept of 'x' problematically, i.e. as in thinking, "x or not x." Yet it also implies that we *can know* (*a priori*) that we cannot know either way whether x exists. While this entails (analytically) that x's possibility cannot be ruled out, and so that it could, *for all we know*, exist, this "could" is *not* an assertion about metaphysical possibility, let alone actuality, but rather only indicates a certain skeptical limit on the scope of *our cognitive abilities*. It indicates, to use Kant's term, a *problem*. If the possibility of x is a problem, then we must take a first order problematic – i.e. *doubtful* – attitude towards it, "x or not x." The higher-order *a priori* knowledge on the other hand – the *knowledge that* we cannot get beyond this problematic attitude – *is* an assertion. It is an assertoric attitude toward the first-order problematic judgment which sorts it into the class of unknowables. The higher-order attitude, however, is an assertion about *knowledge,* about *metaphysical inquiry* and its limits, or about *us* and our cognitive abilities. *We human cognitive subjects* can never inquire into things that do not admit of possible experience and we can know it.

Section 3: Implications for Transcendental Idealism

Any reading of Transcendental Idealism that posits properties of noumena over and above their mere *unknowability* collapses the distinction between the domains of metaphysical possibility and metaphysical inquiry, and makes illegitimate assertions about objects that cannot,

in principle, be so judged. These readings include both traditional camps of reading.[28,29] Moreover, both readings plainly involve assertoric judgments of the sort proscribed by SLU. If we cannot apply the categories to noumena, then we can assert neither that noumena explain appearances, as two-worlds views do, nor that they are token-identical with appearances, as two-aspects views do. The former view attributes to noumena noumenal properties, while the latter attributes to noumena phenomenal properties.

If, as I suggest, domain (2), the domain of metaphysical possibility, comes apart from domain (3), the domain of metaphysical inquirability, then Kant's Transcendental Idealism was never meant to be – or at least should not be – a metaphysical position, whether one that posits two worlds, or two aspects of one world. It was meant to be, first and foremost, a methodological position, a guide to inquiring into real possibility, or a prescription for how to do metaphysics. Kant intended to relativize the domain of metaphysical inquiry (3) to the domain of empirical possibility (4), but never meant to wholly restrict the domain of metaphysical possibility (2) to the domain (4). Insofar as ontology is the science of possibility, in this way, "the proud name of ontology gives way to a mere analytic of the understanding." Kant's goal in restricting our inquiry into real possibility is to establish those synthetic *a priori* principles derived from the categories as principles of metaphysics *as a science*. They hold only for objects

[28] Again, an example of the former, see Van Cleve (1999). Examples of the latter include Langton (1998), Allais (2007), and Ameriks (2010). At some points, Allison (1983) also seems to endorse a metaphysical reading, e.g., when he writes, "But although we cannot know things as they are in themselves, we can nonetheless know how they must be conceived in transcendental reflection when they are considered as they are in themselves. Thus… we can *assert* the nonspatiality and nontemporality of things considered as they are in themselves…" (p.241, emphasis added). His view thus seems to oscillate between a radical epistemological deflationary view of noumena and a metaphysical view that violates the noumenal ignorance thesis. The strong methodological reading I propose here might be read as a way to help Allison out of this unhappy oscillation. Allison also refers to his view as "metaphilosophical or methodological," but his characterization of the methodology is, in the end, quite different and depends on a distinction between two *aspects* of things and the token-identity of the things in themselves and appearances. My reading proscribes all of this speculation.

[29] By "in phenomenalist terms," I mean that the objects of experience, appearances, are identified with *mere* representations or mental entities. See Van Cleve (1999).

into which we can possibly inquire, but they do hold of objects, and not merely of representations, or *mere* appearances. These principles cannot, however, be read as "fundamental," domain-general metaphysical principles, principles of real possibility *as such*; for we cannot rule out the possibility that there might be aspects of reality that fail to conform to them.

The distinction between a metaphysics of real possibility *as such* and metaphysics as a science is a good place to start for understanding Transcendental Idealism. On a methodological interpretation, the goal of the *Critique* is to restrict metaphysical inquiry in light of a theory of cognition, and to show that in the absence of such a methodology, metaphysics can never be "scientific."[30] However, the capacity to know *this much this well* is only guaranteed by a principled carving-out of a sphere of reality, to which we can be sure we have access. This access is guaranteed by the nature of transcendental philosophy, which asks both, "What must our minds be like in order to have cognition?" and also, "What must objects be like if minds like ours are to cognize them?" The thought that there might be parts of reality unknowable by minds like ours, however, is entailed by such a procedure.

Both two-worlds and two-properties readings, by contrast, threaten to drag Kant back into dogmatic speculation, by insisting that we must be able to know that noumena exist to explain the existence of appearances. On the methodological reading, we can say that all along Kant intended to leave room for the possibility of noumena (and not merely their thinkability), but not

[30] We might see the two components of this goal as corresponding to the aims of, on the one hand, the Transcendental Aesthetic and Analytic (which together offer the theory of cognition), and, on the other, the Transcendental Dialectic (which exposes the pitfalls of the dogmatic rationalist method of metaphysics). The methodological turn of critical idealism is a normative circumscription of the "interests" of reason. Kant is instructing metaphysicians on which topics are worth pursuing and which are not, in light of the nature and limits of human cognition.

thereby to assert it.[31] His goal in restricting existential and predicative metaphysical judgments to the domain of possible experience was to confer structure and security on the methodology of metaphysics.

3.1: How "Idealism?"

Kant calls his view "idealism" for much the same reason that he labels Descartes' skepticism a form of "idealism," although the two views are quite different. We saw in the Refutation of Idealism, that Kant uses the phrase "material idealism" to refer to two positions that twenty-first century philosophers might sort differently. He uses the term to refer to Cartesian skepticism about the external world, which "professes our incapacity for proving an existence outside us…" (B275). Cartesian skepticism, according to Kant, maintains that it is *doubtful* whether objects external to our perceptions exist. Kant labels this (fundamentally epistemological) position, "problematic material idealism." He also uses the term "material idealism" to refer to Berkeleyan phenomenalism, which holds (according to Kant) that it is "false and impossible" that objects exist outside of us (B274). He calls this (fundamentally ontological) position "dogmatic material idealism." The fact that Kant sorts these positions into the single category *material idealism* suggests that he did not take the term "idealism" as such to imply ontological mind-dependence.

Kant labeled Cartesian skepticism "problematic idealism," because, on Descartes' model of mind, the existence of objects that cause our perceptions is *uncertain*, and so is a *problem*.[32]

---

[31] One might be tempted to view the methodological reading as a version of a two-worlds view, insofar as it draws a line between the knowable things and the unknowable things. Yet there is a clear difference between *asserting* the necessity, actuality, or even mere possibility of an unknown reality and merely *entertaining* its *possibility*.

[32] Clearly, Kant thinks this is more of a "problem" than Descartes does. Descartes offers an argument for the existence of external objects in Meditation VI, which is based on God's perfection, i.e., that God is not a deceiver. See Descartes, (1984), p.55. For a variety of reasons, Kant cannot accept this argument.

The existence of external objects, i.e., objects of outer experience, cannot be *asserted*, but can only be judged *problematically.* In the Refutation of Idealism and elsewhere,[33] Kant wholeheartedly rejects the Cartesian model of perception that he thinks leads to external-world skepticism, but there is a structural similarity in the ways that Kant and Descartes each arrive at a kind of epistemological idealism.[34] Kant's *methodological idealism* arises *not* at the level of our knowledge of external objects, as two-worlds readings would suggest, but at a higher-order point. It is a skepticism about the existence of radically different ways of knowing and objects that we cannot theoretically *inquire into* and of which we can have no experience. We cannot know whether they, noumena, are even possible.[35] While Kant describes Descartes' position as a variety of *material* idealism, he calls his own a *formal* idealism. Both Descartes' skepticism and Berkeley's phenomenalism hold of the *matter* of theoretical philosophy, i.e., of the *existence* of empirical objects in space and time, while Kant's skepticism, his Transcendental Idealism, refers to the *form* of theoretical philosophy, i.e., of *metaphysical inquiry*, its limits, and its relation to the conditions of possible experience. His view is therefore idealist to the extent that the bounds of metaphysical inquiry are subject-relative. The objects of such inquiry, however, are another question. Noumena, according to Kant, are the *problem* for transcendental philosophy, much

[33] Consider the radical differences between the A and B editions of Kant's Fourth Paralogism (A367-380, B409-411). I think Paul Guyer (1987) is probably right that this indicates some evolution in Kant's thought about the nature of "appearances." I do not take up this historical point here.

[34] For this interpretation of the Refutation of Idealism see ch. 2. There I argue that Kant shifts the debate about skepticism to a higher-order question about the situation of the human cognitive subject, or the human way of knowing. That question was about whether we can know that we have ever genuinely experienced. I argued that this is a question for a noumenal point of view, and so cannot be posed for theoretical reason.

[35] Kant's skepticism about noumena only holds for the theoretical use of the understanding. Kant thinks we can have other kinds of reasons – practical ones – for believing in the existence of noumena. For a discussion of Kant's epistemology of practical belief, see Chignell, (2010); and Chignell, "Kant's Concepts of Justification," *Nous*, 41.1 (2007): 33-63

like external objects are the *problem* for the Cartesian system.[36] They are not, however, the same problem.

In the next section I show how the methodological reading can handle two challenges that have been raised to the two-aspects reading.

3.2: Two Problems Addressed

> The double-aspect view has always seemed to me unfathomably mysterious. How is it possible for the properties of a thing to vary according to how it is considered? As I sit typing these words, I have shoes on my feet. But consider me apart from my shoes: so considered, am I barefoot? But perhaps I am missing the point of the "considered apart from" locution. Perhaps to say that someone is barefoot considered apart from his shoes just means this: *if* he had no shoes, he would on that assumption be barefoot…I cannot help wondering: if transcendental idealism is a tautology, why did Kant write such a long book defending it?" (Van Cleve, *Problems from Kant*, 8).

In this passage, Van Cleve raises two problems for Allison's two-aspects reading of transcendental idealism. According to Allison, the distinction named by the term "transcendental idealism" is between two aspects of objects, which can be known by two distinct perspectives a subject can take on one object type, the only type there is. Van Cleve asks, how is it that from one "perspective" an object can be said to have certain properties, and then, when abstracted from that perspective, no longer be said to possess them. The notion of two perspectives makes no contribution to an explanation of how an object can be said to *both* possess *and* fail to possess the properties in question. To put it crudely, how can an object be causally determined when we're looking at it, but spontaneously free when we're not?

Van Cleve's second question, which interprets a two-aspects position in a deflationary way, asks why Kant spilled so much ink articulating Transcendental Idealism, if he meant by the

[36] Kant says that noumena are a "problem" for the Understanding at, for example, A287-8/B343-4.

claim "things in themselves are unknowable" to say merely that *unknowable things* are unknowable. The staying power of phenomenalist readings, like Van Cleve's, seem to derive from precisely these two issues for epistemological readings; let's call them the charges of (GAP) and (TRIVIALITY).

(GAP): If the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is between two types of properties that can be known by the two different perspectives we can take on objects, it says nothing about how objects can be said to possess properties under one perspective while potentially possessing radically different properties under the other.

(TRIVIALITY): If the distinction between appearances and things in themselves is one between the perspective of knowledge and the perspective of the unknowable, then the claim, "Things in themselves are unknowable" is tautological, i.e. reduces to the claim "Unknowable things are unknowable."

While these two objections pose problems for two-aspects readings, a strong methodological reading can account for them. I consider them in turn.

(GAP) implies that the notion of a "perspective" is too thin to make sense of how, for example, Kant can claim that *appearances* are necessarily spatiotemporal while things in themselves *are not*. To use Van Cleve's example, either a person has shoes on his feet or he does not. The methodological reading, however, understands Kant's claims about space and time as an indication of Kant's *restriction* of metaphysical inquiry to the conditions of cognition, and so of cognizable objects. The very idea of things in themselves, on this line, is the idea of objects or properties that do not conform to the conditions of possible experience. Because we have no way of asserting even their possibility, we should definitely *not assert* that they *have* or *lack* certain properties. To assert that much would require having a kind of access to them which we do not have and which we do not even know is possible. So, to use Van Cleve's analogy, the shoes simply are on the feet.

The problem for the strong *methodological* reading is not to account for two sets of contradictory properties, for we cannot even assert the *possibility* of the second set of properties. The real challenge for our reading is to interpret the motivation, meaning, and strength of Kant's claims that space and time *do not* apply to things in themselves, because they are *mere forms* of our intuition.

While Kant should not *assert* that noumena *are* non-spatiotemporal, because to do so would be to make an assertion about their nature, he could still consistently, if *problematically*, infer, "*If noumena are possible, they are not in space and time.*" If noumena *were* in space and time, then they would meet the conditions for possible experience, as do all things in space and time. Even though we can entertain the possibility that, *if they were in space and time, they would be connectable with perception* [or empirically testable], we still cannot draw assertoric conclusions about objects outside of space and time.[37]

At first glance (TRIVIALITY) might seem to pose more of a problem for the methodological reading than (GAP). If the claims are that we must restrict metaphysical inquiry to the limits of cognition and that noumena consist in any objects or property that fall outside those limits, then it might look like the concept of a "noumenon" is merely the concept of an "unknowable" object. The methodological reading, it might seem, renders the central thesis about noumena tautological, if it claims only that "Unknowable things are unknowable." However, the charge misses an important point. Noumena are unknowable for a particular reason, namely that they are objects and properties that fail to meet the conditions for possible *experience*. Experience, for Kant, in particular is the privileged way of determining objective states of affairs. The claim that "Noumena are unknowable" then, is substantive, since it should

[37] I return to issues about the metaphysics of space and time below in section 6.

be understood as the claim that "Objects that do not conform to the conditions for experience are unknowable." Any true rationalist would tell us that this thesis is no tautology. In fact, it is the thesis of SLU, (Sense Limits Understanding) and amounts to a rejection of dogmatic, rationalist epistemology.

Section 4: The Hard Passages

Again, the real challenge for the strong methodological reading are the several passages in the first *Critique* that suggest that Kant's idealism is a robust metaphysical idealism. Some passages seem to suggest that he is committed to the *existence* of noumena as the causal ground of appearances. Other passages seem to suggest that he *asserts* the full-blooded mind-dependence of space and time and the objects in them. In this section I examine both kinds of passage and argue that the methodological reading has resources to accommodate them.

4.1: Things in Themselves as Causes

It is unlikely that fans of the two-worlds and two-aspects readings would agree with the way I have posed the puzzle of ULS. They would likely draw on passages like the following, which might suggest that Kant endorses the view that noumena do, or even *must*, exist:

> …Even if we cannot **cognize** these same objects as things in themselves, we at least must be able to **think** them as things in themselves. For otherwise there would follow the absurd proposition that there is an appearance without anything that appears. (Bxxvi)

Given our treatment of logical and real possibility above, the beginning of this passage does not pose any problem for us. We must be able to *think* about things in themselves insofar as this thought sets a mandatory limit on the domain of cognition. The passage even highlights the fact that we cannot *cognize* things in themselves, even if we can think them. The worry for our reading arises from the suggestion that it would be *absurd* if we could not think things in themselves, as if the existence of things in themselves necessarily follows from the concept of

"appearances." Henry Allison, for example, argues something close to this position and holds that the concept of a thing in itself follows analytically from the concept of sensibility. Nevertheless, even if the *concept* follows, Kant would not allow the inference from the *existence* of appearances to the existence (let alone necessary existence) of things in themselves. We find evidence of this reading in the footnote to this very passage, where he distinguishes between cognition and thought. There he writes, "To cognize an object, it is required that I be able to prove its possibility…But I can **think** whatever I like, as long as I do not contradict myself…" (fn Bxxvi).

So what exactly is "absurd" in not thinking the thought of things in themselves? Kant claims that it is *absurd* to think there are appearances "without anything that appears." One worry with this passage might be that it suggests that things in themselves are *represented* by, or appear to us through, appearances? Later in the "Amphiboly," Kant unequivocal states that *it is not* things in themselves that are represented by (or presented to us in) appearances. It is not the noumenon, or thing in itself, that appears and is subsequently known by experience. Rather it is the empirical thing that appears and is subsequently determined. He writes,

> But even if we could say anything synthetically **about things in themselves** through the pure understanding (which is nevertheless impossible), this still could not be related to appearances at all, which do not represent things in themselves at all …. (A276/B332)

Charity requires that we do not assume that Kant is flagrantly contradicting himself in stating at (Bxxvi) that we must be able to think "things in themselves" in order to explain how appearances *appear*, while then also claiming at (A276/B332) that things in themselves are not "at all" represented by appearances. When we read the passage at (Bxxvi) in methodological terms the contradiction disappears. The claim that "Although we cannot cognize **these same things as** things in themselves, **we must be able to think them**…" can be read in terms of the domains of

metaphysical inquireability, logical possibility, and metaphysical possibility *per se*. The "same things" in question are the things that we know we can cognize, which fall into the domain of metaphysical inquirability. It is logically possible that these cognizable things might be knowable from a cognitive perspective other than our own, and we *must* be able to think as much. To reject this logical possibility would amount to the claim that we *can know* that our way of knowing, the domain of human metaphysical inquireability, *is the only way*. Asserting that our way is the only way would do away with the concept of "appearance" or "appearing" altogether, the concept which indicates that our inquiry into the world is relative to the human way of knowing. So we "must be able to think" things in themselves, because blocking this possibility would require a kind of knowledge of our own human cognitive position that is impossible for as. So it is *this claim* that is absurd. To call the domain of metaphysical inquirability the domain of "appearance," i.e. to use that *word*, just is to acknowledge the mandatory doubt that our way of knowing is getting at all there is to know. To use it, while rejecting the thinkability of things in themselves, would amount restricting the domain of human cognition while denying the very concept that is supposed to explain that restriction. So, although, things in themselves do not literally *appear* to us through appearances, the very concept of "appearances" as those objects which fall into the restricted domain of cognition, *requires* the *thought* of an *unrestricted* domain of things as they are in themselves, even if we cannot *cognize* things in that domain, or even their real possibility.

The next best passage for traditional metaphysical idealism readings is the following:

> But the cause on account of which, not yet satisfied through the substratum of sensibility, one must add *noumena* that only the pure understanding can think to the *phaenomena*, rests solely on this. Sensibility and its field, namely that of appearances, are themselves limited by the understanding, in that they do not pertain to things in themselves, but only to the way in which on account of our subjective constitution things appear to us. This was the result of the entire Transcendental Aesthetic, and *it also follows naturally from*

> *the concept of an appearance in general that something must correspond to it which is not in itself appearance, for appearance can be nothing for itself and outside of our kind of representation; thus, if there is not to be a constant circle, the word "appearance" must already indicate a relation to something the immediate representation of which is, to be sure, sensible, but which in itself…must be something, i.e., an object independent of sensibility…* (A252, my italics)

This passage has a number of interesting and problematic claims. Similarly to the passage above, it claims that *on pain of circularity*, we must think of things in themselves as the thing that is *not itself* appearance, but which *corresponds to* the appearance. The passage suggests an analytic relation that holds between the concepts of appearance and thing in itself, suggesting that understanding the one already contains the thought of the other. Kant here also claims that appearance *can be nothing outside our kind of representation*. If the concept of thing in itself follows analytically from the concept of appearance, and if appearance is nothing apart from our kind of representation, then mustn't we posit the existence of things in themselves to explain the existence of appearances? If so, then some metaphysical idealism reading must be right. But again Kant blocks this existential inference in favor of the methodological one. The passage continues,

> Now from this arises the concept of a *noumenon*, which, however, is not at all positive and does not signify a determinate cognition of any sort of thing, but rather only the thinking of something in general, in which I abstract from all form of sensible intuition. But in order for a noumenon to signify a true object, to be distinguished from all phenomena, it is not enough that I **liberate** my thoughts from all conditions of sensible intuition, but I must in addition have ground to **assume** another kind of intuition than this sensible one, under which such an object could be given; for otherwise my thought is empty, even though free of contradiction. To be sure, above we were able to prove not that sensible intuition is the only possible intuition, but rather that it is the only one possible **for us**; but we also could not prove that yet another kind of intuition is possible, and, although our thinking can abstract from that sensibility, the question still remains whether it is not then a mere form of a concept and whether any object at all is left over after this separation. (A252-53)

Notice that the concept of "noumena" in question *arises from* the concept of an "object independent of sensibility" in the prior paragraph. The *negative* concept of *noumenon* is merely

the *thinking of something in general*, something that does not depend on our particular sensible way of knowing. This thinking is *not* a cognition of any sort of thing. Kant is describing the inferences he has made in arriving at the idea of an object *independent of sensibility*, with an eye towards evaluating the possible grounds we might have for endorsing a distinction between phenomena (things known by sensibility) and noumena (things known only by intellection). Kant, of course, rejects that such a distinction can be made, for all things that can be *known* by human beings are known through the cooperation of sensibility and understanding. Thus we should strictly *not* infer from the first part of the passage from A252 that Kant is making an existential, or metaphysical, claim about those objects thought as independent of sensibility. Rather, he is merely tracing out an order of thought in an attempt to discover whether there is any *legitimate* ground for the distinction between a world of sense and a world of understanding. Because we cannot even know the real possibility of other kinds of minds that might possibly know objects as they might be independent of *our* sensibility – the purely negative concept of *noumenon* – the mere *thought* of an object independent of sensibility can never be *made into* a cognition, or a positive concept, that "signifies" a "true object." For this reason, even this minimal, negative thought of noumena is, by Kant's standard of narrow knowledge, "empty."[38] Thus we are faced with the view that the concept of noumenon is on the one hand *empty* and on the other, necessarily *thinkable*.

[38] Kant explicitly identifies the sense in which the concept of a noumenon is empty with a certain notion of nothingness in the Amphiboly chapter. The concept of a noumenon is understood as a "nothing" in the sense of being an "empty concept without object," (A290/B347). It is suggestive that the type of "nothing" that Kant attributes to the idea of noumena corresponds to the categories of *quantity*, since the strong methodological reading I propose here attributes to Kant the limit on Sensibility placed by the concept of noumena as a merely *quantitative* one. It is also worth noting that just above this passage Kant identifies the concept of existing as a *noumenon* with the concept of "the way in which the object exists in itself." Kant is thus interested in the negative sense of noumenon.

There are, of course other passages in which Kant seems to state directly that things in themselves *ground* appearances by causally affecting us, and so, arguably, must exist. On a certain reading of these passages, Kant seems to transgress his own SLU thesis. For one example,

> The understanding accordingly bounds sensibility without thereby expanding its own field, and in warning sensibility not to presume to reach for things in themselves but solely for appearances it thinks of an object in itself, but only as a transcendental object, which is *the cause* of appearance (thus not itself appearance), and that cannot be thought of either as magnitude or as reality or as substance, etc… it therefore remains completely unknown whether such an object is to be encountered within or without us, whether it would be canceled out along with sensibility or whether it would remain even if we took sensibility away. (A288/B344, my italics)

In this passage, Kant is explicit that it is the thought of a thing in itself *qua* transcendental object that places a limit on Sensibility. He seems to say, in one breath, both that the understanding "thinks of an object in itself" as the *cause* of appearances and also that it cannot be thought of as "magnitude or as reality or as substance," which is to say, through the categories, to which, of course, the category of causation belongs. If we take this passage as a straightforward statement of Kant's view, namely that things in general (in themselves) *cause* appearances, or that we *must posit* the existence of such things to explain the existence of appearances, then we attribute to Kant a puzzle. According to this puzzle, often labeled the "problem of affection," Kant asserts that noumena, which cannot be known through the categories, must have caused appearances, and thereby are known at least through the relational category of cause-and-effect.

However, this passage is not clearly a straightforward statement of that view. Rather, Kant, in the "Amphiboly of Pure Reason," is again merely tracing out a certain kind of inference, which, in the end, has no existential import. Here he is telling us where a certain idea of *noumenon* comes from in the first place. The understanding makes an inference to the effect

that, because our access to objects is restricted by the conditions on experience, there must be something, perhaps some cause, which is *itself* transcendently outside of them. But this "must be," is not a legitimate theoretical existential judgment, but rather merely the thought of something. In *restricting* sensibility's reach to appearances and not things in themselves the "understanding thinks" of an object "in itself," but *only as* a "transcendental object." The "thought" of the transcendental object is the concept of an object in general, a concept which *means nothing* apart from sensibility. Thus the understanding makes a mistake in abstracting from the data of sensibility, if it attempts to do anything more than entertain the thought of such things.

Thus Kant is merely articulating the inferential origin of a certain idea and not theoretically endorsing the inference, or making any metaphysical claims. In fact, as we saw in chapter 2, Kant rejects the very model of perception articulated by this story in his discussion of Cartesian Idealism. There he argues for the *immediacy* of outer sense, which makes us directly aware of the *existence* of objects in space, so there is no need to posit any unperceived causal ground of our perceptions to explain the existence of the objects of those perceptions.

The claim that follows the "affection" claim supports this reading. It states that we do not know whether such things in themselves might exist *inside* of us (i.e., in the immaterial souls that we cannot rule out), *outside* of us (i.e. outside of the material souls we cannot rule out), or even *that the concept would remain if we got rid of the concept of sensibility.* The concept of sensibility and the fact that it has forms that, for all we know, might be special to minds like ours, suggests that the concept of things in themselves follows from the thought that our sensibility is, again for all we can know, just *our* sensibility. This suggests that the very concept of a thing in itself, of a "transcendental object," depends on the concept of sensibility.

Similarly, just above,

> …One must concede that the categories alone are not sufficient for the cognition of things in themselves, and without the *data* of sensibility they would be merely subjective forms of the unity of the understanding, but without any object…And one cannot call the noumenon such an **object,** for this signifies precisely the problematic concept of an object for an entirely different intuition and an entirely different understanding than our own, which is thus a problem itself. The concept of the noumenon is therefore not the concept of an object, but rather the problem, unavoidably connected with the limitation of our sensibility, of whether there may not be objects entirely exempt from the intuition of our sensibility… (A287-8/B343-4)

That "the concept of the noumenon is therefore not the concept of an object, but rather a problem itself," means that we can only think the concept *problematically,* and never assertorically. We cannot apply categories to the thought of an object that we cannot experience, but which might be knowable by another type of mind, since even the real possibility of other types of minds, or ways of knowing, is unknowable. We can reason problematically that, "*If* there is a free noumenal self, *then* it is morally obliged by the categorical imperative," but never conclude (from a theoretical point of view) that "there **is** a free noumenal self," or even "noumenal selves are really possible." The categories (including, cause-and-effect, substance-and-accident, reality, actuality, and *possibility*) are concepts that are employed in our theoretical inquiry into the world. When they are used beyond the empirical domain, dogmatic metaphysicians transgress the boundaries set for the determination of theoretical assertions.

There are other prima facie problematic passages, however. Consider the following:

> For if appearances are things in themselves, then freedom cannot be saved. Then nature is the completely determining cause, sufficient in itself, for every occurrence…If, on the other hand, appearances do not count for any more than they are in fact, namely, not for things in themselves *but only for the mere representation connected in accordance with empirical laws, then they themselves must have grounds that are not appearances. Such an intelligible cause, however, will not be determined in its causality by appearances*… (A537/B565, my italics)

On one reading, it sounds like Kant is saying that, if appearances are genuinely representations, then things in themselves *must* exist to causally ground them. Ironically, to read the passage in this way is to attribute to Kant a kind of causal model of perception, insofar as representations are *caused by* things in themselves. Yet causal models of perception presuppose that the things that cause of the representations cause them *in the ordinary empirical way*; i.e. the representations are *determined by* the cause, in accordance with *laws of nature*. The passage, however, is supposed to offer an argument for the possibility of *freedom*, a kind of causality that is so radically different from natural necessity that it has no place in the empirical world. So, whatever Kant is getting at, we should wary of this way of reading from the start.

Moreover, notice that this *entire argument* is in the *hypothetical form*. "*If*… appearances *do not count* [according to theoretical reason]… for things in themselves…*then* they themselves must have grounds that are not appearances." It is no mere rhetorical flair that Kant puts this point as a hypothetical. This kind of hypothetical reasoning about things in themselves is permissible. Because we simply cannot, according to the quantitative limit on theoretical knowledge, know that our way of knowing is the only way, we also cannot categorically assert that our empirical knowledge (however advanced it may become) is getting at the entire reality of things, even of those things we can know the reality of. *If* appearances are considered from this point of view, then our knowledge of them is dependent on the human cognitive situation, and they thereby *do not count as* things in themselves. *If our point of view* on reality is just one point of view (a claim which we can neither assert nor deny), *then* reality "in itself" would play some role in grounding that point of view. From the point of view of theoretical reason, however, we must be silent on the question whether our point of view is in fact just one point of view. The "must" in the passage is thus merely a logical and not metaphysical must.

Notice that once Kant starts speculating about intelligible causes, he has already stepped outside the context of pursuing the *theoretical* end of reason. His speculation, in this paragraph, is already in the service of practical reason, which requires freedom as a prerequisite. Just above this passage Kant claims that it is the "common but deceptive *presupposition of the absolute reality of appearance*" that leads to the conflict between the possibility of freedom and the causal order of nature, (A536/B564). One way to put this "deceptive presupposition" is in terms of the domain of empirical knowledge. That deception would be the claim that empirical knowledge tells us the way everything is. Were this claim true, then absolute freedom would be impossible.

There is another hard passage that we can handle in a similar way. In it, Kant sounds like he might be reiterating the claim that *things in themselves* must exist to ground appearances. If there are such appearances, the thought goes, then then there is no contradiction in thinking God might be among them.

> Thus if one asks (*in respect of a transcendental theology)* first whether there is anything different from the world which contains the ground of the world order and its connection according to universal laws, then the answer is: **Without a doubt**. For the world is a sum of appearances and so there has to be some transcendental ground for it… (A696/B274, my italics)

If Kant means that we can *know* that things in themselves *exist* "without a doubt" then he is making a synthetic *a priori* claim with no possible basis and baldly contradicting himself. But, if he means that there must be *some* ultimate ground of the systematic "world order" then that ground might be the phenomena themselves, things in themselves, God, or even the soul. In this passage, Kant does not actually refer to things in themselves, but only to the idea that there must be some "transcendental ground," and just below this passage, to the "transcendental object," (A698/B276). All four options for "transcendental grounds" are left open by the limit on knowledge, insofar as they cannot be denied.

Moreover, this passage, like the passage on freedom, is relative to a particular end. The passage indicates that the argument to follow is *in respect of a transcendental theology*. The proper home of theological claims, for Kant, is the practical sphere. If Kant is appealing to the "room that remains" for the possibility of God's existence for the sake of showing what uses we can make of that concept, then he has already begun the undertaking of other philosophical projects. The passage following this one supports this reading. There Kant continues,

> …**Can** we nevertheless assume a unique, wise, and all-powerful world-author? **Without a doubt;** and not only that, but we **must** presuppose such a being. But then do we extend our cognition beyond the field of experience? **By no means**. For we have only presupposed a Something, of which we have no concept what it is in it-self… (A697-98/B725-26)

Again, this passage does not assert the existence or necessity of things in themselves, for to do that would be to illegitimately "extend our cognition beyond the field of experience." The "must" here is *not* an epistemological model, but a use-relative claim. Kant argues that the idea of God *must* be entertained as a means towards achieving systematic unity in science. He endorses an *as-if-authored-by-God* heuristic as a principle for systematizing our knowledge of nature. But to appeal a God-heuristic in this way does certainly *not* amount to positing such a thing.

Perhaps the best and clearest support of the claim that noumena *must* exist to ground appearances is not found in the *Critique* at all but rather in section 32 of the *Prolegomena*. There he writes,

> …If we view the object of the senses as mere appearances, as is fitting, then we thereby admit at the very same time that a thing in itself underlies them, although we are not acquainted with this thing as it maybe constituted in itself, but only with its appearance, i.e., with the way in which our senses are affected by this unknown something. Therefore the understanding, just by the fact that it accepts appearances, **also admits to the existence of things in themselves**, and to that extent we can say that the representation of such beings as underlie the appearances, hence of mere intelligible beings, is not merely permitted but also unavoidable. (4:315, my bold type)

This passage is fairly unambiguous. Kant admits the *existence* of noumena while at the same time recognizing that admitting this existence is admitting them as *beings of the understanding alone*, what Kant later calls in the '87 B edition of the *Critique* the positive sense of noumena. At this point, Kant is still trying to reply to the charge of Berkeleyan Idealism from the Garve-Feder review by appealing to things in themselves. The problem with this passage is, of course, that it is wildly inconsistent with the passage directly following it:

> … Hence intelligible beings are thereby allowed only with the enforcement of this rule, which brooks no exception whatsoever: that we do not know and cannot know anything determinate about theses intelligible beings at all, because our pure concepts of the understanding as well as our pure intuitions refer to nothing but objects of possible experience, hence to mere beings of sense, and that as soon as one departs from the latter, not the least significance remains for those concepts. (4:315)

The problem, of course, is that *actuality*, or *existence,* is a category which can only be applied within the sphere of objects of possible experience and, "as soon as one departs from the latter, not the least significance remains for those concepts." Even under the charitable interpretation of this passage, according to which we simply cannot *have determinate knowledge* of the particular properties of things beyond the sphere of sense, Kant is still forced to say that we *must infer the existence* of noumena *a priori to explain appearances* without being able to determine, or know, the actuality, or existence, of noumena or any of their properties.

This problem, it seems, is Kant's problem, or at least the problem of the Kant of 1784.[39] While it is true that, *if* Kant is entitled to *assert* that noumena exist, or even that they are

[39] As described in the Preface, the *Prolegomena* was written as a text for future teachers (4:255). It was meant to help introduce *teachers* to Kant's views, which he himself describes as "dry…obscure…opposed to all familiar concepts…and long-winded," in order to subsequently teach them (4:261). It is a "prefatory exercise," to be able to engage the critical system. It was never meant to be read as the primary or fundamental source, or as a substitution for the first *Critique*. Ironically, many teachers have, in part on the basis of the *Prolegomena*, taught the rose-colored glasses perversion of transcendental idealism that follows from privileging passages like this one. The result has been a long-standing tradition of reading Kant as the very kind of phenomenalist that he takes himself to be refuting.

metaphysically possible, then the puzzle of ULS dissolves, this passage does nothing to help make clear *how* Kant could be entitled to assert that they exist. Moreover, it is unclear how to reconcile this passage, or readings that privilege this passage in the reconstruction of Kant's views, with Kant's many claims we have *no insight* into the real possibility of noumena. They must also *systematically* explain how Kant can consistently *rule out* some beings of the understanding (God, freedom, etc.) while still ruling in things in themselves, posited here as beings of the understanding that serve as *intelligible* grounds or causes.

4.2: "Noumenon" in the Negative and Positive Senses

Another possible source of contention is Kant's distinction between two senses of the term "noumena." To begin, it is important to note the context of the passage in which he makes the distinction. The passage directly follows (and perhaps even follows from) Kant's discussion of the illegitimacy of using the categories beyond the scope of possible experience. This is the thesis of SLU, which Kant says in the paragraph leading up to the passage is a "result of the Transcendental Analytic." The pure categories cannot be shown to have "significance" independently of objects of possible experience. He then introduces the source and content of the ambiguity. I quote the section paragraph by paragraph, at some length, and offer my analysis intermittently. This is necessary, because of the centrality of the ambiguity.

> …On the other hand, certain objects as appearances are called by us beings of sense (phenomena), because we distinguish the way in which we intuit them from the character that they have in themselves. But if this is so, then our concept of beings of sense already implies that these objects regarded in that character (even if we do not intuit them in that character) – or, for that matter, other possible things that are not objects of our senses at all – are, as it were, contrasted by us with the begins of sense, viz., as objects thought merely through understanding, and that we may therefore call them beings of the understanding (noumena). And now the question arises whether our pure concepts of understanding might not have signification in regard to these noumena and be a way of cognizing them.

In this paragraph, Kant introduces the context that leads the rationalist, and which led Kant in the *Inaugural Dissertation*, to posit objects known by the understanding alone. Specifically, he says that insofar as appearances are "beings of sense (phenomena)" we are led to distinguish them *in thought,* from beings independent of our power of intuition, *as they might be in themselves.* This conceptual distinction leads "the understanding," (which we can read here as the speculative philosopher), to wonder whether we can apply the categories to objects considered under that negative description.

He continues,

> "But here we find, at the very outset, an ambiguity that may occasion great misunderstanding. For when the understanding calls an object in one reference merely phenomenon, then it simultaneously frames, apart from this this reference, also a presentation of an *object in itself.* And hence understanding conceives that it can frame concepts of such an object also; and since the understanding supplies no concepts other than the categories, it conceives that the object in this latter signification must at least be capable of being thought. Through this, however, the understanding is misled into considering the wholly *indeterminate* concept of a being of the understanding, as a something as such apart from our sensibility, to be a determinate concept of a being that we could in some way cognize through understanding."

Here Kant elaborates the temptation to conflate the thought of a being that cannot be sensed by us with an intelligible *object* that can be *cognized through* the understanding alone, and so through the categories. The understanding is led into this temptation by mistaking the legitimate *conceptual,* i.e. *logical,* distinction between objects that can possibly be sensed and those that could never be sensed, for the *illegitimate* theoretical distinction between objects that we *know* by sense and those that we *know* by the understanding. The crucial passage follows next:

> If, by abstracting from our way of intuiting a thing, we mean by noumenon a thing *insofar as it is not an object of our sensible intuition,* then this is a noumenon in the *negative* meaning of the term. But if by noumenon we mean an *object of a nonsensible intuition* and hence assume a special kind of intuition, viz., an intellectual one – which, however is not ours and into the possibility of which we also have no insight – then that would be the noumenon in the *positive* meaning of the term.

> Now the doctrine of sensibility is simultaneously the doctrine of noumena in the negative meaning of the term; i.e., it is the doctrine of things that the understanding must think without this reference to our kind of intuition, and hence must think not merely as appearances but as things in themselves. But the understanding comprehends that in considering them in this way it cannot make any use of its categories…

Several philosophers have offered interpretations of the distinction between the positive and negative senses of a "noumenon." Two-worlds readings understand the negative sense as the thing-in-itself that grounds and causes the appearances, while reading the positive sense as noumenal objects with determinate properties, like God, freedom, and the soul. The two-worlds reading takes the negative sense to be tied to the *receptivity* of Sensibility.

One-worlds readings by contrast understand the negative sense as the idea of empirical objects considered independently of intuition and their empirical properties and the positive sense in terms, much like the two-worlds reading, as objects *determined* by a different kind of mind, or by an intelligence alone.

While there is certainly something useful in both of these readings, the passage actually indicates a more fundamental distinction, one which offers a key to interpreting Kant's stance on the existence of noumena. The relevant data are the following: The negative sense is "a thing insofar as it is *not* an object of sensible intuition," and is something the "understanding *must think*." The "doctrine" of this negative sense is taken to be "simultaneous" with the doctrine of sensibility. The idea of this *doctrine* is simply that the only way we are *given* objects, and therefore the only way we can *know* them, is through sensibility and its forms. Of course, both two-worlds and two-aspects readings admit this much.

Noumena in the *negative sense* is, according to these data, just is the idea of things as they might (or might not) be *independently* of our way of intuiting them, or, to put the same point another way, things considered *in general*, *as such*, or *in themselves*. At this point, this thought

is merely negative and indeterminate. That is noumena, in this negative sense, are simply *not-phenomena*, or *not* intuitable by us. We *must* think this purely negative thought problematically and entertain its logical possibility. Now any *positive* account of these things would have to involve speculating about the things in the domain of *real* metaphysical possibility just *as such* and would be *dogmatic*. Noumena *in the positive sense* are any objects as they would be described, or thought to be, by this kind of dogmatic speculation. Ultimately, the positive and negative "senses" of the concept "noumena" do not refer to two different kinds of objects or to two different kinds of properties, but rather to a distinction between two kinds of *accounts*, one *negative* and the other *positive*, that could be given of things that cannot be *sensed* by us. Neither way, for Kant, is a legitimate *theoretical way of knowing things*. Having a *negative* concept of noumena just amounts to *entertaining* the thought that there might be things apart from our sensibility that we cannot intuit. Yet this negative thought, for Kant, *as negative*, is a concept without "content," and is therefore "empty." The other readings miss the fact that the positive and negative senses map onto two different ways of *thinking* about objects that are *not* objects of possible experience, the former problematically and the other (illegitimately) assertorically. Although thinking about noumena assertorically *is not at all* legitimate in the context of theoretical inquiry, thinking them problematically is absolutely permissible. If noumena in the negative sense are things we must think but to which we can never apply our categories then they fall into that unknowable room that remains, the domain of the merely logically possible. If we abstract from our particular human way of knowing objects and begin to *posit* positive properties, even properties like *causation*, then we have begun to use and employ the positive sense of noumena, which is a merely dogmatic speculation about the domain of things *in general*, or the domain of real possibility *as such*.

Kant says the doctrine of sensibility is the doctrine of noumena in the negative sense. Although he says that we *must think* noumena in the negative sense in articulating the doctrine of sensibility, he does not say that noumena in the negative sense *exist*. If the doctrine of sensibility articulates the way we come to know objects, the natural "correlate" of this thought is the limiting condition articulated by ULS, namely that our way – while the only way for us – for all we know, might not be the only way. Because we cannot know that our way of intuiting objects is the only possible way, we cannot rule out the real possibility that there might be properties or things that cannot be accessed by our way. But nothing about admitting that ours is *a* way entails that there *must be* or *are* other ways of knowing, or, for that matter, that the things we do know must or do exist in ways other than the ways we know them to. Rather, it merely licenses, even requires, us to *doubt* that our way gets at all there is to know.

4.3: The Metaphysics of Time and Space and the "Excluded Alternative"

> The *a priori* conditions of a possible experience in general are at the same time the conditions for the possibility of the objects of experience. (A 111)

Two-aspects readings take Kant's point of departure in the *Critique* to be the following question: What must our minds be like in order for us to have object cognition? The methodological reading acknowledges the value of this question but takes it to be subsidiary to the more fundamental question: What must the *world* be like for us to have object cognition? If we accept the methodological reading of Transcendental Idealism, we should draw certain conclusions about Kant's views about the metaphysics of time and space, which stand in stark contrast to traditional readings. Specifically, if we read the claim that space and time are "transcendentally ideal," as a restriction of the investigation of space and time to objects of

possible experience, and not as a claim about their metaphysical mind-dependence, then a certain reading of their "empirical reality" follows. According to this reading, space and time, as well as categorial properties, are not only conditions of the possibility of human experience, but also conditions of the possibility of *objects* of experience. Space, time, and the categories are not only constitutive aspects of our experience of the world, but also necessary aspects of the world insofar as we can experience it. That means time and space are real, not in the degraded sense that we cannot help but use them to represent the world, but in the real sense of being genuine aspects of the world and the properties of the objects in it. Moreover, objects must have these properties, or be of this kind, for us to know about them.

This reading essentially reverses the readings of empirical realism and transcendental idealism as given in the general metaphysical reception of Kant. Usually, Kant is taken to be a metaphysical idealist about space and time, explaining temporal and spatial properties either as wholly mind-dependent (phenomenal) or as relations between unknowable things in themselves and subjects (relational). Their *empirical reality* is then understood in terms of their *indispensability* for empirical knowledge or for representing an object as objective. On my reading, they are certainly indispensable for these tasks, but in so determining these temporal, spatial, and categorial properties, we are determining the only aspects of reality that we *can* come to know. Spatiotemporal objects and events are the only things we can know with any certainty, given the way our minds are. To say empirical objects are "ideal" thus refers instead to the circumscription of our *knowledge* of them to a certain limited domain, i.e., the domain of possible experience. They are ideal only insofar as the boundary they set between the portions of

metaphysical reality that we can know and those that we cannot depends on the nature of the human mind. [40]

The debate between Leibniz and Newton is about the natures of space and time *as such*, or *qua* things in general. Both of these great philosophers, one rationalist and the other empiricist, attempted to give positive and universal theories about the domain of (2) metaphysical possibility as such. Kant's move, on the methodological reading, is to challenge that such a debate is even legitimately framed. Specifically, we cannot offer *a priori* inferences about the natures of space and time in themselves, or *as such*, because there is in principle no possible way for minds like ours to access evidence, a third thing, that could justify such an inference. Synthetic *a priori* claims, Kant realized, can only be justified if we narrow their scope to objects of possible experience, because it is only within this domain that such access is possible. We can then use the concept of a possible experience in general as the third thing in order to justify *a priori* claims about its conditions, claims which then apply *as laws* to the objects within its domain.[41] If the Methodological reading is right, Kant's contribution was *not*, as tradition would have it, to offer an alternative and third domain-general *metaphysical* thesis, according to which space and time *as such* are mind-dependent entities.

Ironically, to offer such a thesis would be to make a *dogmatic* claim of the very same kind offered by Leibniz and Newton, since there is no possible experience that could justify such a claim. To judge that space and time *as such* are *merely* subjective or "only in the head" is to make a synthetic *a priori* assertoric judgment about things (space and time) *as such*, or

[40] To reiterate, this is the sense in which Transcendental Idealism is like Cartesian Idealism. They both call into question our ability to know a particular domain of objects. In Descartes' case the domain is *empirical* objects. In Kant's case the domain is super-empirical objects.

[41] I argue in chapter 1 that Kant must solve to object problem and also endorse use-relative transcendental conditions in order to legitimately apply the categories as laws to objects.

considered in themselves, in a way that is *not* relativized to them either as objects of possible experience or as forms of intuition. Since it is certainly not a condition on possible experience that space and time must be merely mind-dependent, we are not entitled to infer that they *are* simply on the grounds that they are conditions of possible experience. Kant's positive view, as I read him, is instead a conjunction of the claims that (1) we *can* know that space and time *are* forms of intuition, and so also must be forms of the objects we intuit, and also (2) that we *cannot* make judgments about them outside of the restricted domain of possible experience.

There is a traditional objection to the "Conclusions" Kant draws from his arguments in the Transcendental Aesthetic, called the objection of the "Excluded Alternative," which gets to the heart of the issue. In the Aesthetic Kant offers five arguments about space and time. The first two in each case are for the *a priority* of the representation (of time or space). The second two are about the *intuitional* nature of the representation. The last, in the case of space, is a transcendental argument from geometry, and the last, in the case of time, is a transcendental argument from the concept of motion as it is used in natural science.[42] Kant then draws several "conclusions" from these arguments, one of which, in the general reception of Kant, is taken to be that space and time (and not merely their representations) are mind-dependent. The objection of the "Excluded Alternative" arises at this point: How is Kant entitled to infer the *mind-dependence* of space and time from arguments about the nature of their *representation*? Kant seems to be inferring from facts about the *representations* of space and time (as necessary forms of perception and as *a priori* intuitions) to the claim that space and time *themselves* are metaphysically mind-dependent. There seems to be an obvious alternative that has been

[42] See the *MFNS*.

excluded, namely that the representations of space and time might hold as necessary constituents of any perceptual representation (intuition), and yet space and time themselves might still be real.

On the methodological reading, however, Kant does *not* exclude this alternative, but rather *embraces* it. His method was always to investigate *what the world is like* by investigating the nature of cognition. It is a further inference, and in fact a mistaken one, to think that uncovering conditions on cognition *implies* the mind-dependence of the objects of cognition. There is no reason to infer "projection" or "illusion" from arguments about the constitutive conditions on certain forms of representation or cognitive accomplishment. The methodological reading therefore rejects the premise of the Excluded Alternative objection. Kant never meant – or at least never should have meant – to *deny* that empirical objects were *really* spatial and temporal (for his argument in the Refutation of Idealism requires that they are really spatiotemporal), but rather only meant to reject the Leibnizian-Newtonian *methodology*, which aims to know space and time in themselves.

Of course the entire history of Kant scholarship didn't simply invent the idea that Kant might be a genuine metaphysical idealist. There are several passages in the Aesthetic and beyond that suggest that Kant himself endorsed the mind-dependence of space and time. However, if we keep in mind the discussion of assertoric judgment from above, the methodological reading can offer some help. For example, in the "Elucidation" of time, Kant raises an objection to his own view, which may seem to smack of metaphysical idealism:

> Against this theory, which concedes empirical reality to time but disputes its absolute and transcendental reality, insightful men have so unanimously proposed one objection that I conclude that it must naturally occur to every reader who is not accustomed to these considerations. It goes thus: Alterations are real (this is proved by the change of our own representations, even if one would deny all outer appearances together with their alterations). Now alterations are possible only in time, therefore time is something real. There is no difficulty in answering. I admit the entire argument. **Time is certainly something real, namely the real form of inner intuition. It therefore has subjective**

> **reality in regard to inner experience, i.e., I really have the representation of time and my determinations in it. It is therefore to be regarded really not as object but as the way of representing myself as object.** But if I or another being could intuit myself without this condition of sensibility, then these very determinations, which we now represent to ourselves as alterations, would yield us a cognition in which the representation of time and thus also of alteration would not occur at all. Its empirical reality therefore remains as a condition of all our experiences. **Only absolute reality cannot be granted to it according to what has been adduced above. It is nothing except the form of our inner intuition."** (A37/B53-54, my emphasis)

On a traditional reading of this passage, Kant simply offers a reply to an objection to his (presumed) view that time is mind-dependent. On that reading, the objection argues that we can know alterations are real by our awareness of the alterations of our own states. But if the alteration of our states is real, then the time in which they alter is real. Kant's reply then on this reading, would amount to a rejection of the claim that time is real in favor of the claim that time is just a feature of our minds through which we represent things and our own alterations. On this reading, Kant's claim that he "admit[s] the entire argument," must be read as rather tongue-in-cheek. He in fact rejects the entire argument, and admits the quite different claim that time is just a real mode of representation. Kant's rejection of the "absolute reality" of time is then read as a rejection of the reality of time and temporal properties.

The methodological reading, by contrast, complicates things. First, recall that in chapters 1 and 2 we saw that Kant thinks we cannot directly perceive time as it is *objectively* determined, either through inner sense or directly through outer intuition. Kant grants that we are aware of the relative apparent succession of our states through inner sense, but rejects the claim that this *determines* anything objectively about us, time, or our place in it. For objective temporal determinations, we must appeal to objects in space. Recall that the premise for that claim was that inner sense only ever represents our states as in succession, so we cannot infer objective temporal order from the subjective. Kant's claim in this passage that "he admits the whole

argument," and that "time is the real form of inner intuition" can be read as foreshadowing this point. On this reading the Kant is agreeing with the objector's premises but blocking the conclusion. We do have access to *real* time through inner sense, or in our awareness of the alteration of our own states. We *are* aware of temporal succession through inner sense, but, for Kant, this *apparent* and purely relative succession can only be made into determinate knowledge by appeal to objects in space. Through inner sense alone, we cannot *determine* time objectively, precisely because temporal succession is the *form* of inner sense. At best, we are aware of a mere temporal stream of states. So inner sense alone cannot, in principle, get us from the subjective successive order of our own states to the objective temporal position of those states in the world, or, for that matter, to any other objective claims about time.

Nevertheless, Kant's claim that time is just the *real* form of intuition should be read both in terms of the form of *intuiting* and of the *intuited.* It is the real form of the way we intuit objects, including ourselves, and also the real form of objects that can be intuited. Yet we must still appeal to objects in space to *determine* this temporal form and transform these intuitions into full-blooded scientific *experience*. By attributing "subjective reality" to time, Kant does not thereby rule out that time is *real* but rather only rules out that being aware of the succession of our inner states is alone sufficient to know anything about the way time *determinately and objectively* is. So he, in a sense, grants the premises, but denies that the conclusion follows.

If we cannot know the way time *objectively* and *determinately* is through inner sense alone, we definitely cannot know anything about the way time would be "in itself," or "absolutely." Kant's denial of time's "absolute reality," is a denial that time can be known to be a condition on reality, or real possibility *per se*, independent of our ability to inquiry into it. In turn, it is the denial of the inference from the *reality* of time within the domain of intuitable

objects, to its universal reality outside of that domain and in general for all really possible things. He has already blocked this inference in his argument against the self-subsistence of time and so is aiming to clarify that position. There, originally, Kant writes,

> Time is not something that would subsist *for itself* or attach to things as an objective determination, and thus remain if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of the intuition of them; for in the first case it would be something actual yet without an actual object," (A32-A33/B49, my emphasis).

In this original argument against Newton, the term "for itself" is elaborated in the following way: "or attach to things as an *objective determination*, and thus remain if one abstracted from all subjective conditions of the intuition of them." This passage does not deny that time is *objective* but rather denies that we could know its objective determinations *if* we abstracted from the conditions of intuition. Kant's point then is not to deny that time *ever* attaches as an "objective determination" of things, but only that it could so attach if we abstracted from the human way of intuiting.

Here Kant also employs the modal term of actuality in his own *categorial* sense. Above we saw that the "real" modalities expressed by the modal categories are defined relative to possible experience. Here Kant's argument against Newton employs "real" actuality (or reality), which refers to objects of *actual* perception, or to objects related by empirical laws to objects of actual perception. The claim against Newton should thus be read, "…for in the first case it [time] would be [*judged to be*] actual, yet without an actual object [having been given]." The objection is therefore simply that the inference to absolute time violates, or rather unjustifiably applies, the modal category of *actuality.* While Kant's discussion of the modal concepts comes later in the *Critique,* his argument against Newton anticipates it. We should not infer a Newtonian absolute time, if it is not the kind of thing that can be perceived, or justified by drawing on perception in any way. To make the inference is to mistakenly view a phenomenon

from a noumenal point of view. Kant therefore means to conceptually distinguish the notion of *objective* times, which can be determined as objective by appeal to objects in space, from the Newtonian notion of *absolute* time, understood as a dogmatic condition on the possibility of things *per se*, or in themselves.

To return to the long passage above from the Elucidation, we can see that Kant is there blocking a similar type of inference. In that case he is also blocking the inference from our awareness – or possibly even knowledge -- of our *inner alterations* in time to "absolute" time, which is in-principle *unperceivable*. He is *not* blocking the inference from our knowledge of inner alteration in time to the claim that time is *real*. The time in which alteration is represented *is real*, but it is also the type of time we *can represent.* If it is the kind we can represent, then it falls within the restricted domain of possible experience. Kant's claim that time is "nothing except the form of our inner intuition," should therefore be read in light of his reply to Newton: Time is nothing *for itself* and everything we know about it stems from its role as a form of intuition.

In the footnote to the Elucidation, Kant continues,

> I can, to be sure, say: my representations succeed one another; but that only means that we are conscious of them as in a temporal sequence, i.e., according to the form of inner sense. Time is not *on that account* something in itself, nor any determination objectively adhering to things. (B54, my italics)

On traditional readings, Kant is again taken in this passage as rejecting the claim that things, objects, have "real" temporal properties. His claim that for representations to succeed one anther "means that we are conscious of them as in a temporal sequence," is taken to mean that they are not really *in* a temporal sequence, but "appear" in a temporal sequence because they are "ordered" that way in inner sense (in our inner mental life). But here I think Kant again is appealing to the distinction between appearance and *experience* and not the distinction between

appearance and illusion. His point is that my awareness of my own inner states is not a sufficient ground to infer objective determinations about time. The arguments of the Analogies and the Refutation show that we need quite a bit more to determine time.

On the traditional reading of the passage, the phrase, "I can to be sure, say," is taken to indicate a rejection of the truth of the claim to follow, as if Kant meant "We can say it, but it really means something else." The claim, "that only means..," is read as a diminution of the significance of the first clause. On the methodological reading, however, nearly every term has a different, and in fact more literal, sense. The phrase, "I can, to be sure, say" should be read, "It is of course true that…" And "that only means" should be read as "that precisely means" or "that just means," *and nothing more*. The whole claim can thus be read, "It is of course true that my representations succeed one another; but that just means that, through inner sense, we are aware of their temporal sequence." Kant's point is not to then argue, *on these grounds*, that time is *unreal*, but rather to reject the claim that *on these grounds alone*, we can determine the objective properties of time, let alone "absolute" time *in itself*, as it is conceived by Newton beyond the domain of possible experience. Thus we should read the footnote to the Elucidation also in the context of the Elucidation, namely as a matter of blocking the *assertoric* inference from our awareness of the temporal sequence of our inner states, to our knowledge of what things are like in general, or as such.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I've raised a puzzle for certain readings of Transcendental Idealism and shown one way of avoiding the puzzle. In distinguishing between what is metaphysically possible *per se* and what, in the context of theoretical reason, is metaphysically, or theoretically,

inquirable, we can see how Kant can consistently claim that the real possibility of noumena is merely doubtful and also that the concept of noumena restricts the domain of sensibility.

The distinction between metaphysical possibility and inquirability also suggests that Kant never meant to say that the concept of noumena was semantically empty in our sense, although it is empty in his epistemological sense. A concept is empty in this epistemological sense when we cannot draw on experience to justify its application to objects, i.e. when it is a useless endeavor for theoretical reason. If one wanted to say that the concept of noumena was semantically empty, as a stronger empiricist might, one would collapse the domains of inquirability and real possibility *per se*, and, thereby, be forced to reject the real possibility of noumena. Under this reading, the puzzle of ULS arises with overwhelming force.

The distinction between metaphysical possibility and theoretical reason's metaphysical inquirability also throws further light on the reading of Kant's reply to Descartes' skepticism offered in chapter 2. Recall that in the extreme skeptical scenario from that chapter, the subject draws on a putative experience of waking up from having been a brain in a vat to subsequently raise doubts about whether she presently is awake. The fact that she can appear to herself to have woken up means that the state of affairs of waking up *conforms* to the conditions of possible experience, insofar as it is spatio-temporal and has categorial structure. This means that waking up from the vat is empirically possible. The problem is that, in the skeptical scenario, if I *had* woken up and genuinely and fully experienced waking up, in the right way, I would *nevertheless* be led to doubt the veridicality of the current, in-fact veridical, and perfectly good experience. I would be calling into doubt a claim, which, in the absence of the defeater, I would take myself to *know*. This is not to say that I cannot know by experience that *I have woken up* – I can and do know this by experience (every day) – but it means that I cannot know by

experience whether, in my particular cognitive situation, *I have genuinely experienced* or have undergone something else. If theoretical inquiry is restricted to empirical possibility (and its conditions), and if the question whether *I have genuinely experienced* (or not) is *not* determinable by any or all possible experience, then the question falls outside the scope of theoretical inquiry. Among the conditions of *possible* experience is not the higher-order claim that the set of empirical knowledge that I take myself to know, the "one experience," is *actually* experience. Like other noumenal states of affairs, the thought of the skeptical scenario is conceivable. We can consistently *entertain* the possibility that we *have never* experienced. Yet, like other noumenal matters, we cannot ever assert, or judge, the real, metaphysical possibility that we have not, or, for that matter that we *have*. Transcendental Idealism thereby also gives us a systematic reason for thinking that, because we can never achieve an answer to the question, "Have I ever enjoyed veridical experience?" we should dismiss it altogether as a question for theoretical reason. The methodological turn thus transforms the question of skepticism into a remote and noumenal quandary.

Kant famously claimed that "All interest of my reason…is united in the following three questions: **1. What can I know? 2. What should I do? 3. What may I hope?**" (A805/B833). In this dissertation I have argued for one way of understanding the role that Kant thinks intuition plays in placing constraints on reason in the first of its three pursuits. Kant thought that a critique of the faculty of knowledge was a necessary prerequisite to engaging in the other two philosophical projects in any legitimate way. By offering this interpretation of Kant's answer to the first question, we find a hint as to how Kant means to move forward with answering the second. To say we can neither assert nor deny the real possibility of things in themselves is to say there is no possible theoretical argument we can give *against* the existence of transcendental

freedom. If, in pursuing theoretical knowledge, reason grapples and fails to rule out the existence of freedom, then practical reason is free to assume it as a necessary condition of its own unassailable laws.

Works Cited

Kant's Works

Kant, Immanuel. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Trans. Robert Louden. Cambridge University Press, 2006.

---. *Concerning the Form and Principles of the Sensible and Intelligible World*. *Inaugural Dissertation. Theoretical Philosophy 1755-1770.* Trans. David Walford. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

---. *Critique of Practical Reason*. *Practical Philosophy*. Trans. Mary J. Gregor. Cambridge University Press, 1999. (*CPrR)*

---. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Paul Guyer, and Allen W. Wood. Cambridge University Press, 1998.

---. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Trans. Werner S. Pluhar. Hackett Publishing, 2002.

---. *Critique of Pure Reason.* Trans. Norman Kemp Smith. London Macmillan, 1934.

---. *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. Trans. Paul Guyer, and Eric Matthews. Cambridge University Press, 2001. *(CPJ)*

---. *Jäsche Logic*. *Lectures on Logic*. Trans. Michael Young. Cambridge University Press, 1992. (*JL)*

---. "Letter to Marcus Herz, February 21, 1772." *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics and the Letter to Marcus Herz, February 1772.* Trans. James Ellington. Hackett, 1977.

---. *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. Trans. Michael Friedman. Cambridge University Press, 2004. (*MFNS*)

---. *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*. *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Trans. Henry Allison et al. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

---. "What Real Progress has Metaphysics Made in Germany since the Time of Leibniz and Wolff?" *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*. Trans. Henry Allison et al. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Other Works

Adams, Robert Merrihew. "Things in themselves." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 57.4 (1997): 801-825.

Allais, Lucy. "Kant's Idealism and the Secondary Quality Analogy." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 45.3 (2007): 459-484.

---. "Kant, Non-Conceptual Content, and the Representation of Space." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 47.3 (2009): 383-413.

Allison, Henry. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism: An Interpretation and Defense.* 1st ed. Yale University Press, 1983.

Ameriks, Karl. "Kant's Idealism on a Moderate Interpretation." *Kant's Idealism: New Interpretations of a Controversial Doctrine*, 29-53. Springer, Netherlands, 2011.

---. *Kant's Theory of Mind: An Analysis of the Paralogisms of Pure Reason*. Eds. Schultig, and Verbugt. 2nd ed. Oxford University Press, 2002.

---. "Kant's Transcendental Deduction as a Regressive Argument." *Kant-Studien*, 69.1-4 (1978): 273-287.

Bennett, Johnathan F. *Kant's Analytic*. Cambridge University Press, 1966.

Bermúdez, Jose L. "What is at Stake in the Debate on Nonconceptual Content?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 21.1 (2007): 55-72.

Burge, T. *Origins of Objectivity*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Brook, Andrew. *Kant and the Mind*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Campbell, Johnathan. *Reference and Consciousness*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2002.

Chignell, Andrew. "Causal Refutations of Idealism." *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 60.240 (2010): 487-507.

---. "Kant's Concepts of Justification." *Nous*, 41.1 (2007): 33-63.

---. "Real Repugnance and Belief about Things-in-Themselves: A Problem and Kant's Three Solutions." *Kant's Moral Metaphysics: God, Freedom, and Immortality.* Eds. Bruxvoort et al. De Gruyter, 2010.

--- "Real repugnance and our Ignorance of Things-in-themselves: A Lockean problem in Kant and Hegel." *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus*. 7 (2011): 135-159

Descartes, Rene. *Meditations on First Philosophy*. *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes.* Trans. Jonathan Cottingham et al. Vol. 2. Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Dicker, Georges. "Kant's Refutation of Idealism." *Noûs*, 42.1 (2008): 80-108.

Engstrom, Stephen. "Understanding and Sensibility." *Inquiry*, 49.1 (2006): 2-25.

Falkenstein, Lorne. *Kant's Intuitionism: A Commentary on the Transcendental Aesthetic*. University of Toronto Press, 2004.

Frege, Gottlob. "On Sense and Reference." *Ludlow*. (1997) (1892): 563-584.

Friedman, Michael. *Kant and the Exact Sciences*. Harvard University Press, 1992.

Ginsborg, Hannah. "Was Kant a Nonconceptualist?" *Philosophical Studies*, 137.1 (2008): 65-77.

"Göttingen Review." *Kant's Early Critics: The Empiricist Critique of the Theoretical Philosophy*. Ed. Bridgette Sassen. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Guyer, Paul. *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Hanna, Robert. *Kant and the Foundations of Analytic Philosophy*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2001.

---. "Kant and Nonconceptual Content." *European Journal of Philosophy*, 13.2 (2005): 247-290.

---. "Kantian Non-conceptualism." *Philosophical Studies*, 137.1 (2008): 41-64.

---. *Kant, Science, and Human Nature*. Oxford University Press, 2006.

Heck, Richard G. (2000). "Nonconceptual Content and the "Space of Reasons."" *The Philosophical Review*, 109.4 (2000): 483-523.

Hoffman, Joshua, and Rosenkrantz, Gary. "Omnipotence." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (2006/2012). URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2012/entries/omnipotence/>.

Hume, David. *A Treatise of Human Nature*. Courier Dover Publications, 2003.

Kitcher, Patricia. "Kant's Dedicated Cognitivist System." *Historical Foundations of Cognitive Science*. Springer, Netherlands,1993.

---. *Kant's Transcendental Psychology*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

---. *Kant's Thinker*. Oxford University Press, 2010.

Langton, Rae. *Kantian Humility: Our Ignorance of Things in Themselves*. Oxford University Press, 1998.

Longuenesse, Beatrice. *Kant on the Human Standpoint*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Matthews, H. E. "Strawson on Transcendental Idealism." *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 19.76 (1969): 204-220.

McDowell, John. *Mind and World*. Harvard University Press, 1994.

McLear, Colin. "Kant on Animal Consciousness." *Philosophers' Imprint*, 11 (2011): 1-16.

---. "Kant on Perceptual Content." *Mind*, (Forthcoming).

Nagel, Thomas. *The View from Nowhere*. Oxford University Press, 1989.

Peacocke, Christopher. *A Study of Concepts*. MIT Press, 1992.

---. "First Person Illusions: Are they Descartes', or Kant's?" *Philosophical Perspectives*, 26.1 (2012): 247-275.

---. *The Realm of Reason*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Pendlebury, Michael. "Making Sense of Kant's Schematism." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, 55.4 (1995): 777-797.

---. "The Role of Imagination in Perception." *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 15.4 (1996): 133-138.

Prauss, Gerold. *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich*. Bouvier, 1989.

Robinson, Hoke. "Two Perspectives on Kant's Appearances and Things in Themselves." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 32.3 (1994): 411-441.

Schopenhauer, Arthur. *The World as Will and Representation*. Trans. E.F.J Payne. Vol.1. Courier Dover Publications, 2012.

Sellars, Wilfred. *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*. Harvard University Press, 1956.

Smit, H. (2000). "Kant on Marks and the Immediacy of Intuition." *The Philosophical Review*, 109.2 (2000): 235-266.

Strawson, P. F. *Individuals*: *An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics*. Routledge, 1959.

---. *The Bounds of Sense*: *An Essay on Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*. Routledge, 1966.

Tolley, Clinton. “Kant on the Nature of Logical Laws.” *Philosophical Topics*, 34.1 (2006): 371-407.

Uebel, Thomas. “Vienna Circle.” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2006/2012. URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2012/entries/vienna-circle/>

Van Cleve, James. *Problems from Kant*. Oxford University Press, 2003.

Walker, Ralph. *Kant.* Routledge, 1999.